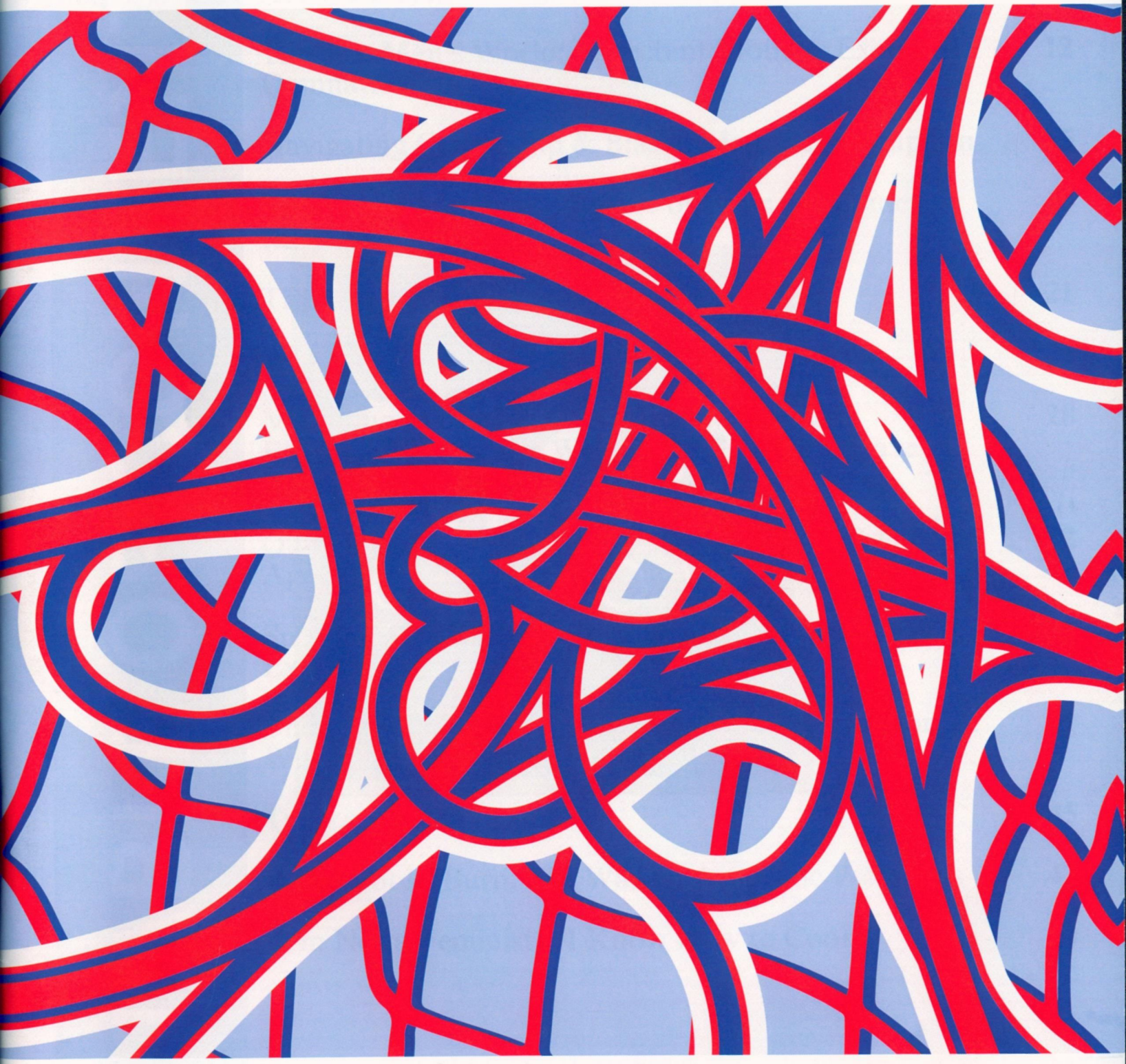
ONE WORLD

SPRING 2024



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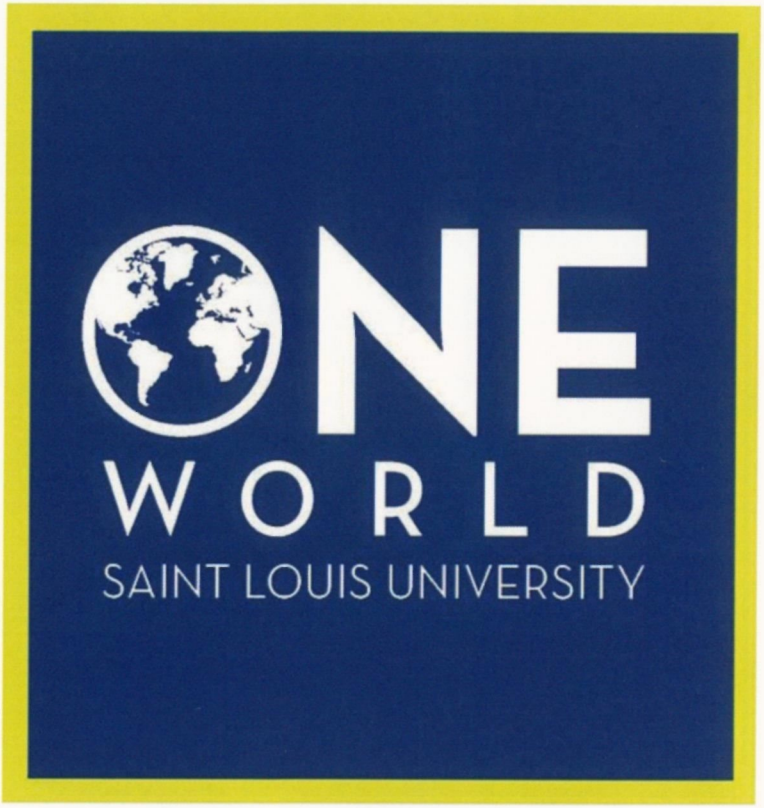
ONE
WORLD
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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One World Magazine

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Letter From the Editor:

If I had not served as One World Magazine's Editor-in-Chief this semester, I would have written about the obi of a kimono stitched with tatreez. Tatreez is traditional Palestinian embroidery that decorates clothing with rich, intricate designs. Through art, this kimono represented the coming together of two cultures as an expression of solidarity in the face of oppression: *Together, we are stronger.*

We have seen much of the same over the past several months. People everywhere in every place, from before and now, are using what they have in paint and ribbons and paper, in needles and thread, to express a sense of solidarity. What unites these creations is a collective sense of seeing, of eyes on Gaza, and the hunger for justice our position as witnesses has caused. This is what solidarity through art does — it does not just link us, it transforms us into a collective.

This theoretical topic of artistic solidarity is one of many ways to interpret this edition's theme, "Crossroads." The focus could be intersectional and interdisciplinary issues. As above, one could use the theme to describe the coming together of different concepts in order to create a complex whole. Or, crossroads can be used to describe a crucial decision — a breaking point, a precipice.

Each writer has chosen to undertake this theme uniquely. *Motherhood or Medicine? American medical education won't let women in healthcare have both* by Sara Parikh has explored the crucial decisions women going into healthcare must make due to pressure from the rigors of medical school. *Navigating censorship and bias in media consumption* by Rhema Briggs has examined the role of sousveillance as a means to challenge censorship in the media and take back collective power. *The Witch is Back!: Feminist Media, Appropriation, and Witchcraft* by Weronika Grajdura brings together a myriad of topics surrounding the recent rising interest in all things witchcraft, from appropriation to female empowerment.

As we leave SLU's campus for the summer, I encourage you to continue to see the complexity and intersection of issues that plague our campus, local communities, and world. Do not stop writing. Do not stop protesting, donating, and speaking out about the change you want to see in the world. We must preserve our momentum; we must lean on each other during the march ahead. Moreover, I encourage you to make this solidarity visible as others have done for Palestine. When our solidarity is visible, and when it includes pieces of our hearts, it only strengthens our collective resistance. It is a signal of our shared oppression and our shared promise to end it. We say: *This is who I am. Who I am sees you.*

To my writers and designers, you have put forth a worthy edition this semester. Thank you for your work; thank you for your willingness to bravely approach new topics and explore the intricacies of "crossroads."

Until next semester,

Birch Fábregas
Editor-in-Chief, Fall 2023 - Spring 2024

Addressing the Intersectionality of Autism and Gender Nonconformity

By Brynn Drake

A study conducted by the University of Cambridge in August 2020 found that adults who were transgender or gender diverse were three to six times more likely to have an autistic diagnosis than those who were cisgender. While there have been no precise answers about why this might be the case, some speculate that both autism and gender nonconformity involve a rejection of how American society expects someone to act. I spoke with three individuals, Allison Brewer, Aidan Kimberling, and Kayl Baker, who all identify as both autistic and gender nonconforming, to discuss this intersection of their identities.

Autism and gender non-conformity influence many facets of life. Both Brewer and Baker discuss different issues they face in romantic relationships due to being disabled, gender nonconforming, or both. Brewer talks about the current desexualization of disabled people in general. Eugenics, the belief that disabled people should not reproduce, is not only widely believed across America but is also the foundation of this desexualization issue. I pose to you the question: have you ever seen a post or news story along the lines of "Look at this nice person going to prom with a disabled person." Often called "Inspiration Porn" these "feel good" stories communicate one thing: engaging romantically with someone with a disability is an act of charity and sacrifice. If disabled people were viewed rather as regular people with different abilities than other people then the news story would turn into a boring "Teenagers go to prom." Hence, the media continues the public perception that romantic relationships with those in the disability community have two actors: the charitable and the burden. This perception impacts those with disabilities on a daily basis by perpetuating this desexualization narrative Brewer discussed.

Baker focuses on how gender nonconformity also influences perceptions of their romantic relationships. She talks about how cis-passing nonbinary people receive woman-adjacent labels from cis partners. For instance, Baker, who uses she/they pronouns, identifies as nonbinary, yet frequently receives gendered labels like "girlfriend." These kinds of labels are common, as much of the English language inherently has gendered language. While the transition away from this widespread use of gendered language is ongoing, it's crucial to ensure that our gender-nonconforming friends feel secure and included. For example, as a Midwesterner, I often struggle with saying "Hey guys!" Gendered language is built into our vernacular so it is easy to fall back into it. However, what matters is having a respectful intent when using such language and also seeking to understand how others relate to language. Relationships built on understanding and trust require extra work. Queer relationships do not just mean "same sex." A queer relationship can simply be a relationship in which one party is queer. Baker stresses how some previous partners do not understand what a queer relationship is or how it is different from a cis relationship. However, it is important for the people involved to see each other for who they are, not what their passing gender is.

Although our current generation has gotten better at understanding queer relationships, gender nonconformity, and even disability, there is still a disconnect. Baker describes that because she looks a certain way, people do not perceive her as gender nonconforming. When she tells people about her identity, she often gets a sense that they don't get it, but do understand that it's socially acceptable now. While the acceptance may be there, the willingness to learn, engage, understand, and ask questions is often lacking.

When it comes to disability, our generation reacts the same way. When someone tells an abled person that they have a disability, the abled person typically reacts with support and kindness. However, this kindness isn't extended when students ridicule the student deemed "weird," or as Baker puts it, having an "off" vibe. As a result, they will make fun of the autistic person when they don't know the person is autistic because the person is weird, different, or "not like us." The lack of understanding then contributes to the bullying, often unbeknownst to the critic, of someone's disability. There is then a need for respectful conversations that allow for questions to be asked with the intention of learning about someone's identity without trying to change or convince someone to change their identity. These kinds of conversations are sorely lacking in today's society as some may be too scared to offend while others may be too set in their own opinions.

Looking through a broader lens, people with differing identities such as gender nonconforming or autistic are criminalized for simply existing. As Brewer describes it, there is a constant public desire to "fix" them. With disability, there is such a large focus on fixing or curing the disability that people are not asking the more important question: given my neighbors' current abilities, how do I help them thrive? This is where conversations of universal design and accommodations come into play. The people building this country, building this world, need to understand that the world will crumble if it exists as if every disability will soon be cured. Everyone can live as abled people do. Disabled people are fully capable of many amazing things, but they need to be given the means and opportunities to do so. They require a society that prioritizes granting them the chance to flourish, rather than merely "fixing" them to conform to an outdated and bigoted societal norm.

Brewer and I briefly discussed the idea of being "currently abled."

Even if you currently have no disabilities, one day your eyesight, hearing, and joints will probably start to deteriorate.

In addition, you could be diagnosed with a disability or paralyzed any day. I personally was diagnosed at 19 with my disability, but Brewer wasn't diagnosed until their mid-twenties. As someone who will most likely have at least one disability, don't you want a world that will be accommodating to you? Don't you want to live in a world in which you can still live to the fullest?

This idea of "fixing" rather than encouraging continues into the gender-nonconforming conversation as well. Gender dysphoria is still considered a psychological disorder. Kimberling elucidates society's desire and expectation for transgender individuals like herself to conform strictly to the conventional gender binary. Once receiving gender-affirming care, Kimberling realized that it became easier for society to recognize her gender. As a result, she received less outward hatred and insensitive questions revolving around her gender identity. In many people's views, if they cannot "fix" the gender nonconforming people by making them identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, then the second best option is helping them look and fall into the gender binary of man or woman. Gender-nonconforming individuals such as Brewer, however, find that they have no desire to be placed in such a box. For Brewer, gender doesn't make sense, and they have no desire to be a girl or boy. This disruption leads to cisgender discomfort, which is often a precursor to hatred.

As a result of this hatred, new laws are presented to restrict access to gender-affirming care. It is no secret that states across the country are trying to pass anti-LGBTQIA+ bills, especially in SLU's home state of Missouri. Bills can be filed multiple times and are continuously being introduced, so it is difficult to say precisely how many Missouri anti-LGBTQIA+ bills are currently being discussed. However, in March of 2024, Missouri made the news for proposing a bill that would make teachers register as sex offenders if they were found supporting transgender students in their transition. This bill, like many Brewer and I discussed, targets kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. These students are susceptible to bullying. This was true for Nex Benedict, a transgender student who died after being bullied by fellow students.

These students are also susceptible to suicidal ideation. A study published in the National Library of Medicine identified various factors contributing to suicidal ideation, including gender-based victimization, discrimination, bullying, violence, rejection by family, friends, and community, harassment by intimate partners, family members, police, and the public, as well as discrimination and ill-treatment in the healthcare system.

The Trevor Project estimates that over 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. with at least one attempted suicide every 45 seconds.

As far as transgender and non-binary youth go, a 2022 survey found that more than 50% of these youth seriously considered suicide in 2021. Notably, the rates seemed to be higher in states where lawmakers have pursued anti-trans legislation.

While transgender youth are often targeted by these bills, all transgender people are affected by anti-trans legislation. As Brewer states, "anti-trans bills kill trans people." The combination of anti-trans bills promoting trans hatred, and, as a result, hate crimes, and the increased suicide rate prove this statement to

be true. While it may be easy to say this legislation does not affect me, it does affect Brewer, Baker, Kimberling, and many more people like them. Without taking a stand against such legislation, your peers' lives are put at risk. This discrimination is an urgent problem that will only be addressed when those who passively let such legislation happen decide to stand up for what is right over what is easy. SLU has so many pre-med and nursing students dedicated to saving lives, but when the opportunity to save lives today presents itself, will we as a community take the opportunity?

Unfortunately, for people like Brewer, Baker, and Kimberling there is another hurdle to receiving gender-affirming care. Certain states have worked to pass legislation that further restricts gender-affirming care to people with autism. Missouri was initially one of those states but leadership backed down after protests. There is still a notion that people with autism cannot make decisions for themselves. An attack on their bodily autonomy and rights is often what follows this ignorance. Encouraging the idea that autistic people are unable to make medical decisions for themselves furthers the "helpless" narrative. People with disabilities do not need to be "fixed," and they don't need your pity. They need you to trust that they know what is best for them. And, they can have independence and autonomy when put in an environment that allows them to thrive. The world, however, is not yet at this place of understanding and trust.

But, it is not too late and there is still hope. Citizens are able to call and email their representatives when such legislation is introduced. They can sign petitions and attend protests. Advocacy works; community works. Brewer raises an important question about our tendency to view situations through a deficit model, focusing on what individuals or groups lack rather than appreciating the rich diversity and sense of community that arise from embracing different identities. "Joy is how we win," they say, and Kimberling reiterates this idea by stating they wouldn't change themselves if they had the option. Despite the fear and anxiety anti-trans legislation creates, embracing identity and finding community with others is something to be celebrated.

Are We Doing Enough for Postpartum Mothers?

by Camille Smith

There is no doubt that being a mother is hard. Alongside the grueling hospital visits and painful birth process, mothers are often expected to juggle household chores, take care of their children, satisfy the needs of their partner, and even continue their careers, all with a baby attached at the hip. Postpartum parenting is often difficult, especially for first-time mothers. It is a lot of trial and error. According to the Parent Index, 90% of postpartum mothers often report feeling unsupported and lonely during these times since their sole purpose has been diminished to taking care of an infant.

In addition, American society tends to prioritize the infant's well-being over that of the mother. This has created a mental health crisis among mothers as they navigate stressful conditions with minimal support from their partners, friends, and family members. This lack of social support has resulted in an invisible mental health crisis. As healthcare providers prioritize the physical health of the child, the mental health of postpartum mothers is an extremely neglected and stigmatized topic.

Some postpartum mothers struggle with a mental illness called "postpartum depression." The National Institute of Health states that one in seven women experiences postpartum depression. This mental condition can impact both sexes, and symptoms include extreme sadness, low energy, anxiety, crying, lack of sleep, and inconsistent eating.

The "baby blues" is a common phenomenon when new mothers experience dips in their mood catalyzed by the new stressors of caring for a baby. These mood dips typically last for the first weeks and slowly decline as mothers adjust to their new routines. According to the National Health Service, around 80% of mothers will experience some form of baby blues. However, postpartum depression is a mental illness characterized by longer periods of depression that can last for months.

While it is common for moms to experience a form of the "baby blues," it is important to remember that postpartum depression is a mood disorder, meaning it disrupts the mother's emotional regulation. It is a form of illness that affects both the mother and the infant. It is a disorder that should be taken seriously and treated with care rather than diminished to simply the "baby blues."

In extreme cases, some mothers even develop "postpartum psychosis." This condition is an intense mental disorder; some symptoms include extreme confusion, loss of touch with reality, paranoia, delusions, disorganized thought processes, and hallucinations.

While mental health awareness has increased throughout the years, mental illness remains a stigmatized topic for postpartum mothers, and many mothers fear reaching out for help. A survey conducted by the University of Detroit-Mercy revealed that,

> "Screening for depression alone may not be sufficient, that mothers are willing to contact a professional for help in the postpartum period, and that assessments after birth should include a broader assessment of life's difficulties rather than focusing on childcare responsibilities alone."

Mom-shaming, which is the act of judging mothers for their parenting choices, has become increasingly intense with social media. Social media sites are now riddled with "mom-influencers" who

provide parenting tips and intimate details of their "perfect" family. This type of social media content can be helpful as it often provides resources and advice for new mothers, but it can also be extremely toxic and can cause mothers to develop what has been nicknamed "mom shame." Moms now face societal shame for topics such as potty training, breast-feeding, co-sleeping, and daycare. These differences in opinion have created a competitive sphere among mothers, negatively impacting mothers' mental health.

In addition to mom-shaming from other moms, social media users also feel compelled to vocalize their annoyance towards children and give unsolicited advice online. When I open TikTok, mothers' content is flooded with negative comments about how their children don't belong in public and how every parenting choice they make is a mistake. The harsh reality is that children and their mothers belong in public, and forcing children out of places like planes and restaurants also removes mothers from these spaces as well.

To improve social support towards new mothers, I think it is essential that we increase research on mental illnesses, such as postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis.

There is a significant lack of research on these mental illnesses and currently, there is no standard evaluation for diagnosis. Establishing a standard for diagnosis and researching the potential causes of these illnesses could significantly improve the well-being of mothers, infants, and families.

It is crucial that the healthcare industry provides a holistic approach to postpartum care, emphasizing both the health of the infant and the mother. Alongside postpartum check-ups, mental health check-ins should be a standard practice for new mothers. In addition, to destigmatize mental illness among mothers, communities should organize support groups to decrease unhealthy comparisons and mom shame.

We need to remind mothers that motherhood is not a competition and it takes a village to raise a child. Moms face shame for employing help from family members, nannies, night nurses and daycares. American mothers are expected to be independent and self-sufficient caregivers, with sometimes limited support from their working partners. Our society has equated asking for help with a sign of weakness, and this has inadvertently created a paradox in which mothers feel shame and guilt for something as simple as asking for help.

Reaching out for support and assistance is natural, and society should create more platforms for postpartum mothers to get the support they need. It is through this holistic approach that we can remind postpartum mothers that they are not alone and that we as a society care about them.

This Is a Man's World: Expectant Mothers Expecting Damnation

By Hope Ziegler

I have always wanted to be a mother. Of course, I am still way too young to think about it seriously yet, but is it not every little girl's dream to have a family of her own someday? Or at least, we are told it should be. What we are not told is that a pregnant belly rarely fits through the door of the workplace, which society has modified to make it nearly impossible for a woman to be both maternal and ambitious. Unfortunately, it becomes very clear, very quickly, that women can either be strong, independent powerhouses, or nurturing mothers–not both. With this nagging notion that the two worlds should never intertwine, women are sent off to an unforgiving space full of misogynists waiting to pounce. Because many people still tend to view pregnancy as a "condition" that further hinders this already frail gender, women's ability to create life has grown synonymous with an obstacle businesses hope to avoid dealing with. Thus, pregnant women are frequently left without security, both in their work and personal lives. If we, as a society, want to have any chance of putting an end to this, we must first allow our attention to be drawn to the harsh truth of it all.

Before one can even begin to comprehend the prejudices pregnant women in the workplace often face, one must first consider all women's strife in the workplace. Since most have heard the very true horror stories surrounding gender discrimination in the workplace, it feels redundant to dance around the cold facts with pretty words. Instead, let the numbers speak for themselves. Kim Parker, director of social trends research at Pew Research Center, and Cary Funk, former director of science and society research, report in their findings on gender discrimination that "About four-in-ten working women (42%) in the United States say they have faced discrimination on the job because of their gender." Let that sink in. Even after years of fighting for equality, almost half of all women in the U.S. have still had to ward off unjustified bias. And it is not just a gut feeling, either. Their reports have also shown that 25% of women have earned less than a male counterpart at one point or another, for no other reason than because their gender is seen as being less competent.

Despite this being a prevalent issue, the point of this article is not to talk about baseline gender discrimination in the workplace. It is simply pertinent that one grasps how bad the situation is for women, in general, in order to comprehend how much worse circumstances are for those expecting in the workplace. Being a woman in a "man's domain" is bad enough — forget wanting to have children on top of that. Of course, there have been steps to prevent pregnant women from facing unfair treatment from their employers, most notably the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which reads

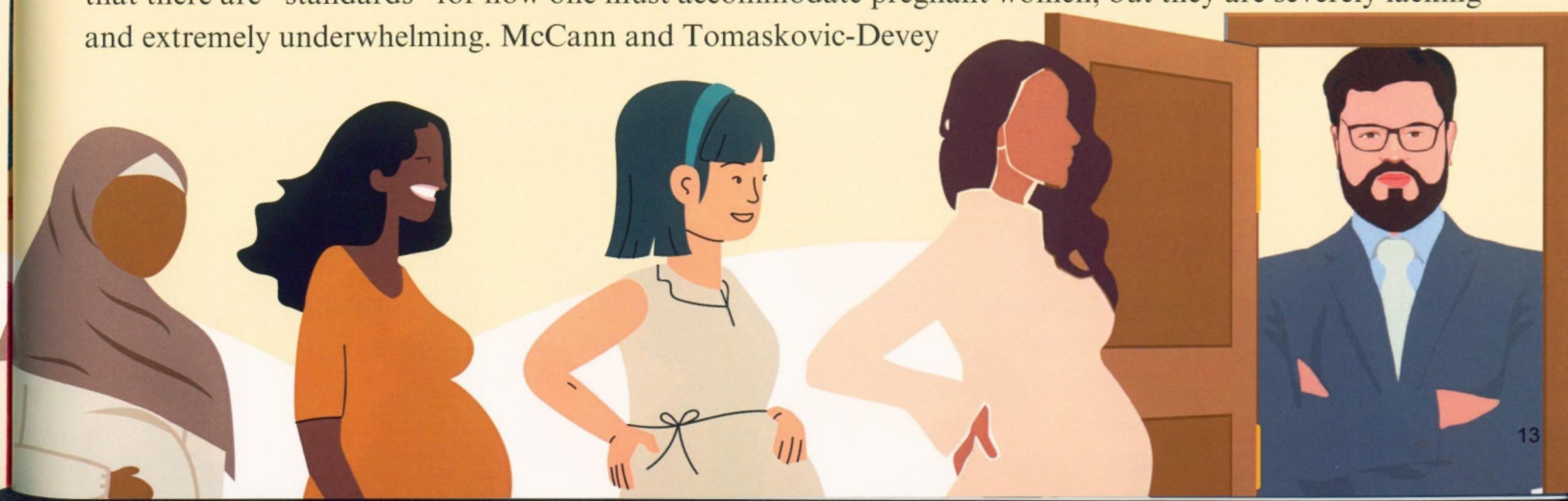
that "Women affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes … as other persons not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work."

Before this law was passed, it was entirely legal, and usually encouraged, for employers to fire women who'd had the audacity to become pregnant. Mainly, it was in order to avoid the strain of having to deal with their hormones, inadequate drive, extra benefits, and maternity leave, but it also meant one more woman out of the way so that the "real men" could get to work. Of course, this is all entirely false and based on long-standing constructs of the patriarchy, but nevertheless, some employers still abide by these values–they simply have to be more discreet about it now.

Despite there being laws to end discrimination in the workplace, thousands of pregnant women are still continually terrorized by it. Ben Gitis, Emerson Sprick, and Adrienne Schweer, in a study on behalf of the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Morning Consult, report that nearly 23% of mothers have considered leaving their jobs for fear of discrimination during a pregnancy, 20% say they have already experienced pregnancy discrimination in the workplace, and 21% have been afraid to tell their employers about their pregnancy at all. Obviously, pregnancy discrimination is much more common than most realize, and even in situations where discrimination is not actively enforced, women still have a fear of punishment for their motherhood. This issue is not reserved for one group of pregnant women either, and as Natalie Kitroeff and Jessica Silver-Greenberg not-so-gently put it in their article for the New York Times, "Whether women work at Walmart or on Wall Street, getting pregnant is often the moment they are knocked off the professional ladder." Although this discrimination is not reserved for specific women, studies show that those of lower economic status are more blatantly stereotyped than women of higher status.

Robin Shulman at The New York Times writes that low-wage workers are more likely to be fired on the spot after revealing their pregnancy to their employers than those of the upper class. Meanwhile, professional women face more subtle discrimination, including being directed away from certain assignments, taken off the partner track, and denied raises or bonuses. Carly McCann and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey also assert that "Low wage jobs are typically more physically demanding and thus require accommodations for pregnancy. At the same time, these jobs are also the most inflexible and least likely to offer employees paid sick, vacation, or medical leaves." Women who are seen as expendable from the get-go, and who may not be able to retaliate because they cannot afford to, are seen as easier targets by employers. Thus, their chances of facing more blatant and callous forms of pregnancy discrimination increase.

This class issue is extremely important to identify when researching pregnancy discrimination, but, overall, the issue is rampant for any woman who deigns to be a mother in their place of work. It is true that there are "standards" for how one must accommodate pregnant women, but they are severely lacking and extremely underwhelming. McCann and Tomaskovic-Devey



remind us that the Pregnancy Discrimination Act simply requires employers "to accommodate workers if it accommodates 'similarly situated' employees … This means [that] 'employers can treat pregnant women as badly as they treat similarly affected but nonpregnant employees.'" In simpler terms, if a workplace refuses accommodations for any employee with a disability, it is within their rights to deny pregnant women accommodations as well. With "an estimated 250,000 women … denied accommodations related to their pregnancies each year," we must do better. How can we claim we are progressing if we are leaving thousands of pregnant women behind in the process?

In recent years, this problem has been addressed multiple times with many attempts to rectify it, but it never seems to be enough. Those brave enough to endeavor motherhood in the workplace are often met with scorn and a sudden loss of job security. Others are consistently and subtly told not to get pregnant, or else they must face the consequences. And yet, men are never told to tread lightly when deciding whether or not to be a father, so why are women the exception? How, after all that we have done for the world, can there still be doubts about our capabilities, pregnant or otherwise? More importantly, what can we do to change this?

It is not enough to just tell your neighbor about this issue or gripe over it with your friends at brunch (though that certainly does not hurt). We must take action. We must do better for the people like Otisha Woolbright, who was forced to lift heavy trays at Walmart until she got hurt; Rachel Mountis, who was a top saleswoman laid off three weeks before giving birth; and Erin Murphy, who was forced to pump milk in a cramped supply closet–along with the many others that shared their stories with the New York Times. There are a multitude of ways to get involved, especially with organizations of advocacy, such as A Better Balance. This is a national nonprofit organization who "uses the power of the law to ensure all workers can care for themselves and their loved ones, without sacrificing their economic security."

Using this program, we can take action by learning about the law and using it to defend pregnant women in the workplace. More than that, by getting directly involved through the website, you can choose to donate or personally assist in the fight against discrimination. As students of SLU and citizens of Missouri, we can help organizations like A Better Balance by appealing to our elected officials to advocate for or co-sponsor new legislation. A current example would be the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act, which goes beyond just pregnancy to provide workers with up to 12 weeks of paid leave to bond with their newborn–another frequent concern for expectant mothers in the workplace. We have the world at our fingertips, more platforms than one can count, and stronger voices than ever before–we simply have to use them. Do not let the opportunity pass you by. Do not let victims of pregnancy discrimination be silenced.

NAVIGATING CENSORSHIP & BIAS IN MEDIA CONSUMPTION

By Rhema Briggs

In the initial weeks of observing the genocide occurring in Gaza, I distinctly recall feeling a deep sense of frustration. This feeling persisted because I sensed there was a significant amount of information available online that I was not able to view, leaving me feeling uninformed.

I found myself scouring my social media platforms, as I noticed that certain networks were intentionally flagging down content regarding this crisis. However, I remained persistent in my search because I recognized the cruciality of remaining aware of the brutalities befalling millions of innocent lives.

One afternoon, while scrolling through my TikTok feed, I came across a video of a seemingly privileged woman sharing her perspective on the genocide. Since my algorithm was curated to provide me with content similar to my values and ideals, I blindly assumed this woman's stance would be one that I agreed with.

If I'm honest, it took seconds to realize that I'd deem her opinion both irrelevant and naive. With tears welling up in her eyes, and a trembling voice, the woman told her audience that it was important they take their eyes off what was happening in Gaza so that they might take a break from witnessing the grueling information many were receiving.

At that time, I was angry to witness such a selfish stance spread to millions of viewers. Worse than that, I hate that I saw so many people who seemed to agree with her opinion.

In the weeks following, I attended one of my lectures and listened to my professor's introduction of surveillance and sousveillance in society. I learned that sousveillance was an action taken on by citizens simply to counter being surveilled by hierarchical institutions.

During the lecture, my professor posed a question to the class that asked us to determine the benefits and detriments of sousveillance.

One of my peers mentioned the publishing of content relating to Black men being killed at the hands of law enforcement. They stated that although one must remain informed on the tragedies being shed in society, the viewing of this content; whether it be videos or pictures of murder, has become far too much to observe.

Some of my classmates concurred with this stance — yet again, I began to experience emotions of intrigue and disagreement with the comments.

I found myself questioning why people dismiss the importance of educating themselves on certain topics simply due to the severity of the subject matter being presented.

It didn't take long to understand that the interplay of censorship, framing, and willful ignorance has impacted what topics we choose to enlighten ourselves with.

The term '*censorship*,' defined as the suppression, prohibition, or removal of content considered obscene or politically unacceptable, sheds light on the formidable power authorities wield.

The use of censorship becomes a wearying weapon against creators. The limiting of their content serves as a stark reminder that the perceived freedom of expression is not absolute, particularly when it challenges established narratives.

Media outlets play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, and the coverage of content surrounding ongoing global crises reflects the pervasive bias against certain movements.

Congolese creators have spoken out online to spread awareness of the rape, murders and displacement that they have been enduring in Congo for over 30 years. Acts of protest, including self-immolation, have been undertaken to prompt viewers to address the crisis, using appropriate language to describe the events occurring on their land.

Yet, when American news outlets finally did release information regarding the cruelty taking place in Congo (as well as Gaza, Sudan, Haiti and more), it has consistently been boiled down to simply being a "conflict."

The framing of these issues by various outlets reveals an amalgamation of cultural, political, and ideological forces. This intricate dance between producing stories versus revealing the truth has become glaringly transparent to me these past few months.

The impact of these factors is acutely evident in the real-world consequences faced by creators. Palestinian photographer Motaz Azaiza has been continuously subjected to flagging and removal of his content, both during his time in Gaza and after leaving.

Despite receiving praise, Azaiza feels it is misplaced. In interviews, he says that the focus is often on the number of followers he gained during his time capturing footage of the genocide, rather than delving into his experiences since October 7.

In an Instagram post, the photographer addressed how the media's portrayal of him has negatively affected his well-being.

"People are interested how I gained 18 million followers more than how I survived," Azaiza said. "Start every conversation by asking me about the 18M not about how I survived, about my loss or about my burned life."

The suppression of content like Azaiza's, a reflection of activism, underscores the tangible risks creators take when using their platform to address contentious issues.

News networks often lean heavily in a particular political direction, focusing more on sharing one-sided opinions as opposed to straightforward facts. This shift away from impartial reporting has become quite common, distorting how consumers view world issues.

These narratives not only tarnish the reputations of creators in these areas, but additionally contribute to real-world consequences such as the perpetuated silencing and suppression of posts, the explicit spread of hate and bias against content, and the threatening of creators' lives and well-being. These instances highlight the far-reaching impact of media narratives about the content we consume from outlets outside of the ones we commonly see.

This partiality (intentionally) makes it difficult for one to structure well-informed ideas, let alone conversations regarding content one may not initially consume and understand. It's crucial that the media carefully consider how they present their information so that viewers will be conscious of what topics they judge or favor.

Our government further exacerbates censorship by controlling access to the information and content we can consume. It's imperative to recognize that we are living in a country that continues to suppress information from its constituents, making it unnecessarily difficult to comprehend what information is being presented to us.

This suppression extends to education, where access is being stripped away at various levels. K-12 schools have restricted curriculums, with subjects pertaining to race and identity either being banned or taught in a biased manner.

State governments have chosen to omit pivotal events or perspectives that would help expand the awareness of historical events to children. There have been instances where books addressing race or depicting diverse perspectives have been banned from school libraries and curriculum lists, limiting students' exposure to critical discussions on race and societal issues.

Due to this abuse of power, individuals tend to find themselves hindered in their efforts to further educate themselves, ultimately stopping them from seeking out this information altogether.

Many people won't take the time to sit down and inform themselves of pressing issues because it's presented in a way that isn't easy for one to break down and digest. It's presented this way for a reason — to keep us uninformed and compliant.

As privileged individuals, whether we accept it or not, the access to information that we do have should be utilized to challenge these restrictions and seek out a more comprehensive understanding of the world around us.

Keeping our eyes "on" the issues that happen around us is necessary so that we can have well-rounded discussions. Adapting to these changes in media coverage means rethinking one's expectations and searching for the truth in a sea of think pieces.

In a society shaped by censorship and biased media narratives, it's essential that we actively challenge these restrictions and seek out diverse perspectives. As we navigate through the complexities of media coverage and education, the concept of sousveillance emerges as a powerful tool in our quest for truth.

Sousveillance, the act of citizens monitoring those in power, offers a counterbalance to censorship and allows us to hold authorities accountable for their actions. By embracing sousveillance and remaining vigilant in our consumption of information, we can foster a more informed and empathetic society.

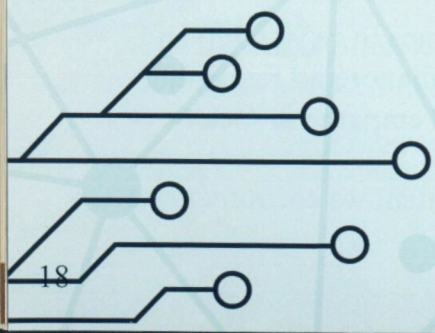
Let's keep our eyes open to the realities around us, engaging critically with the content we encounter and advocating for transparency and truth.

Mind Over Metal:
The Future of Brain-Computer Interfaces

By Miit Shah

The intersection of neuroscience and computer science represents an exciting frontier in technological innovation with brain-computer interfaces growing as a groundbreaking area of research and development. BCIs aim to bridge the gap between the human brain and external devices, supporting direct communication and control without the need for traditional methods like keyboards or touchscreens. This union of man and machine holds implications for human-machine interaction, offering new possibilities for individuals with disabilities as well as enhancing human capabilities in various areas.

At the forefront of this technology is Elon Musk's Neuralink project, which aims to develop advanced BCIs capable of effortlessly integrating with the brain.



Neuralink represents a visionary effort to enhance human cognition and transform the way mankind interacts with technology. By utilizing neuroscience and cutting-edge advancements in computer science, Neuralink seeks to unlock the full potential of this technology, enabling direct interfacing between the human brain and digital systems. This initiative has the potential to reshape industries ranging from healthcare to entertainment, opening the way for innovative applications such as restoring mobility to individuals with paralysis, enhancing memory and cognitive function, and even opening the way for the fictional superpower of "telepathic communication." However, the ethical and societal implications of BCIs raise important questions about privacy, autonomy, and consent in the context of the nature of human identity. This emphasizes the need for thoughtful consideration and responsible development of this technology through the lens of human medical ethics.

BCI technology facilitates direct communication between the brain and external devices by translating neural signals into commands. This process involves the use of sensors or electrodes to detect brain activity, which is then interpreted and processed by a computer algorithm. Through this interface, individuals can control devices or applications using their thoughts alone, bypassing the need for traditional input methods. This connection between the brain and technology holds potential for revolutionizing various aspects of human interaction and experience. In healthcare, this technology offers promising avenues for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. They can allow those with disabilities to choose to regain lost functionalities, such as controlling prosthetic limbs or communicating through speech devices. Additionally, it holds the potential for monitoring and managing neurological conditions like epilepsy or Parkinson's

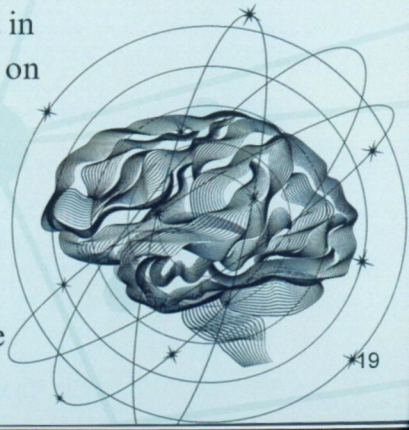
disease, providing real-time insights into brain activity and allowing personalized treatment approaches.

Moreover, BCIs offer the potential to revolutionize the way we interact with digital interfaces. They can enable hands-free control of devices, facilitate text entry and communication for individuals with motor impairments, and even pave the way for direct brain-to-brain communication technologies. These advancements have implications for enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in communication platforms and digital interfaces. Furthermore, the tech holds promise as assistive technologies in various contexts, including workplace accommodations, transportation, and daily living tasks. By enabling individuals to interact with their environments and devices more intuitively, BCIs can enhance independence and life satisfaction for people with disabilities or age-related impairments.

Elon Musk's Neuralink project is leading the development of merging humans with artificial intelligence through neural-chip implants. The ambitious goals of Neuralink revolve around creating a direct interface between the human brain and technology. This allows for smooth integration between biology and A.I. These neural implants are intended to enhance human cognition, modernize human-machine interaction, and potentially lead to symbiotic relationships between humans and A.I. systems. The implications of Neuralink's technology for the crossroads of human cognition and technological augmentation are vast and complex. The ability to augment human capabilities through neural-chip implants raises questions about human identity, autonomy, and ethics.

As individuals merge with A.I. technologies, concerns arise regarding the preservation of human agency, the integrity of consciousness, and the potential for societal inequalities. Marcello Ienca, a professor of ethics at Technical University of Munich, is confused about the process Musk has taken to inform the public and experts about scientific trials of Neuralink "through casual social media updates" rather than traditional outlets for science like peer reviewed publications. Musk has shared updates on trials through X, formerly known as Twitter before he bought and rebranded the app. His updates include snippets of information regarding the latest breakthroughs with Neuralink. Additionally, the profound impact on personal privacy and security calls for careful consideration and ethical deliberation. Neuralink's technology has the potential to bridge the gap between neuroscience and computer science, piloting in a new era of "human-machine symbiosis." Laura Cabrera, a neuroethicist at Pennsylvania State University's Rock Ethics Institute, calls for the creation of "more rigorous ways" to hold Neuralink and other similar companies accountable and increase transparency. Cabrera emphasizes the need for Neuralink to properly undertake scientific trials and communicate developments to the public and scientific boards, urging them to follow protocol set by scientific advisory boards.

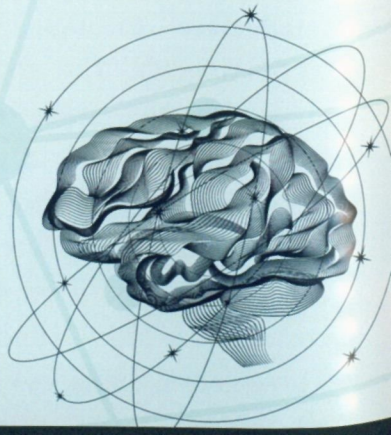
By developing advanced neural interfaces, Neuralink aims to enable direct communication and interaction between the human brain and digital systems. However, this pursuit also confronts ethical dilemmas at the crossroads of technology and humanity. Recent reports indicating Neuralink's involvement in experiments on primates, and instances of chimpanzee deaths, highlight the ethical



complexities inherent in the development of neural-chip implants. A claim made by Elon Musk states that no "monkey had died due to Neuralink chips, but were already terminally ill." However, a former Neuralink employee has come forward to voice, "The claim is ridiculous if not a straight fabrication" in regards to Musk's statement. While Musk has not been found guilty of illegal activity regarding the chimpanzee deaths, Ienca had this to share in context of Neuralink registering clinical trials: "[It] violates fundamental ethical guidelines for biomedical research." This is said in the context of the Declaration of Helsinki which sets the stage for ethical principles in medical research with humans. Neuralink's lack of communication in setting up an internal ethics board or code of ethics alarms the scientific community. While this developing technology provides valuable insights into the potential of humans and machines, it also raises concerns about animal welfare and the moral implications of scientific research.

Reflecting on the ethical implications and future directions of BCIs, it becomes clear that responsible innovation and equitable access to neurotechnology are crucial. BCIs offer tremendous potential to enhance human capabilities and redefine the boundaries between mind and machine. However, to fully realize this potential, it is essential t o address ethical concerns surrounding privacy, consent, and autonomy while ensuring that the interfaces are accessible to all who could benefit from them. Looking ahead, research and development holds promise for transformative impact. Continued innovation may lead to improvements in BCI performance, reliability, and versatility, paving the way for new applications in various fields. From enhancing the biocompatibility of neural implants to exploring novel uses in education and entertainment, the possibilities are vast.

Ultimately, the technology has the power to revolutionize human-machine interaction, offering opportunities to augment cognition, communication, and quality of life for individuals worldwide. Elon Musk's advancements in BCI technology is emerging, and requires constant monitoring by scientific advisory boards and the public to evaluate their own knowledge of Neuralink through updates by means of scientific articles.



The Cobalt Curse of the Congo

By Ava Walker

Since the days of Belgian colonization, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the site of violence, poverty, and corruption — to no fault of the Congolese people. The extractive imperialism that took place in the Congo in the 1800s and 1900s from Belgium, mirrors the modern-day extraction of cobalt that's currently taking place with China.

Cobalt is mainly used within an industrial framework. The element plays a key role in modern technology with renewable-energy innovations, such as electric vehicles, which rely on cobalt as a power source. Specifically, cobalt is a key component of lithium-ion batteries, with the element being what allows for an E.V.'s overall efficiency in terms of power storage and thermal stability. Furthermore, cobalt plays a role in mobile phone production with potential uses for artificial intelligence.

Congolese cobalt extraction is characterized by dangerous working conditions, unlivable wages and all-around violence and human rights abuses. So, the 3.4 million metric tons of cobalt which make up half the world's supply is a curse to the Congo more so than a blessing. This is what's known as a resource curse, or paradox of plenty; resource-rich countries fail to benefit from their natural resource wealth. Instead, they commonly face less economic growth, less democracy, or worse developmental outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources. In the case of the DRC, these symptoms of the resource curse occur because of the exploitative foreign influence taking place within the country's cobalt mining industry

The cobalt supply that lurks beneath the ground of the Congo has spawned the career industry of "artisanal diggers," or creuseurs, as the New Yorker has labeled them. These creuseurs, as reporter Stavros Nicolas Niarchos said in his testimony to the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, are "people who mine for themselves or small cooperatives" as they dig for cobalt in hope of the money that comes along with it.

Most of these creuseurs don't secure permits to mine. Rather, they dig their own pits and sell their collected ore to "depots" or "maisons," according to Niarchos. These depots, said Niarchos, are commonly in the hands of foreign traders, with some either being owned by international companies or supplying larger depots owned by international companies. In his testimony, Niarchos said that one of these depots is a subsidiary of a China-based company that supplies cobalt to companies such as Apple and Samsung.

The Congolese creuseurs work to secure cobalt for these depots. The risk of cobalt toxicity, cave-ins, and other dangerous working conditions don't act as a deterrent because, according to the New Yorker, "the cost of living is remarkably high."

The issue of unaffordable living in the Congo is deeply intertwined with the fact that the DRC's exploitation by other countries has continued to contribute to its widespread poverty. A symptom of the cost of living, for example, is the fact that many Congolese women engage in prostitution to support their families. As prostitution out of necessity occurs, children are transporting the toxic, raw mining materials out of the mines. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that at least 25,000 children are working in these mines. These children are often drugged during their unregulated mining labor to prevent any hunger pains from lack of food.

As Congolese creuseur Odilon Kajumba Kilanga put it in his New Yorker interview, "the work [is] a symptom of his poverty rather than as a path out of it."

For the DRC, the prospect of mining holds a certain romance to it with cobalt echoing dreams of riches. However, as poverty runs rampant in the Congo, the dream of riches remains a reality only for the Congo's exploiters. For the Congolese, Kajumba details that crippling living costs leave "necessity trump[ing] any fears about personal safety." Upon mentioning this to the New Yorker, Kajumba cannot help but recall the number of dead bodies found after cave-ins.

The perils of the Congo's cobalt curse go beyond that of deadly working conditions and systemic poverty. The presence of this sought-after material has globalized the conflict in the eastern Congo in a number of ways. For example, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, the neighboring countries of Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the militias they support, "have financial stakes in Congolese mines." This has only exacerbated the conflict the Congo is currently facing with Rwanda as it battles the domestic problems of its eastern region. As a major stakeholder in the Congo's cobalt industry, Chinese technology is being used to help fight the M23 Rebels, a Rwanda-created Congolese military group that are insurgents against the DRC. According to the Human Rights Watch, the M23 rebels are responsible for a number of human rights abuses including rape and other war crimes. As of February 2023, the M23 rebels have occupied a number of towns in eastern North Kivu. Despite China's "aid" to the Congolese government, it has been reported by the Council on Foreign Relations that "Uganda has purchased

Chinese arms to carry out military operations within DRC's borders."

With all the Congolese families who have become miners, it is easy to assume that the Congo itself owns these mines. However, according to the New York Times, 15 of the 19 Congolese cobalt mines are either owned or financed by Chinese companies. According to the U.S. Congressional Executive Committee on China, cobalt obtained by these Chinese companies is then refined in China and sold to battery manufacturers worldwide. The foundation for this exploitation lies in the 2008 deal between the DRC and China.

Voice of America, the official external broadcasting institution of the U.S., details how the original agreement between Chinese investors, including state-owned Chinese firms, "entered [into] a $6.2-billion joint venture with Congo's state mining company to run the Sicomines copper and cobalt mine, in Kolwezi in southeastern DRC."

In exchange for the Sicomines mining agreement, the Chinese investors promised to use the proceeds from the mines to build "$3 billion worth of infrastructure across the [DRC]," according to the Voice of America. This is rooted in the fact that, despite the Congo being the size of continental western Europe, it had pressing infrastructure and development needs from persisting poverty, corruption, and violence. However, this minerals-for-infrastructure deal became simply a mineral-extraction operation as the Chinese investors failed to use revenues for improvements, a fact supported by many observers.

A 2017 report by the U.S.-based NGO Carter Center demonstrates how the Sicomines complex "was unable to account for $685 million out of about $1.16 billion that had been allocated for infrastructure spending by that time."

In a more present lens, the Congo's Inspectorate General of Finances — think an auditor but for the DRC state—detailed in a 2023 report how the Sicomines mine "had likely been undervalued," with a demand for infrastructure investments to be raised "to $20 billion to reflect the mine's worth."

The Inspectorate General of Finances also found "only $822 million had been invested in infrastructure since 2008," an amount that's been determined to be "glaringly low," especially when considered in the context of the endemic poverty that the Congo faces.

Emmanuel Umpula, the executive director of the DRC-based NGO African Natural Resources Watch said that "Sicomines has also continued operating and generating profits despite a lack of infrastructure spending."

As of January 2024, according to Voice of America, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi and the Chinese investors have rebalanced the 2008 Sincomines mining agreement. A large factor in this renegotiation was that $7 billion would be brought into the Congo's treasury, which President Tshisekedi promised to use to build infrastructure for the country. For a country whose national budget is set to be $16 billion with a population of about 100 million, the $7 billion "represents a huge and possibly transformative opportunity."

However, Voice of America said that questions and concerns remain abundant about this deal as

“the renegotiation took place in secret,”

with a lack of transparency. Since the renegotiation is shrouded in mystery, Umpula says that “a simple way of resolving the issue would have been to halt the [Sicomines] mine's operations until the Chinese investors started construction.”

The Congo was blessed with an abundance of natural resources from copper to diamonds to cobalt. Yet, it has never had a chance to benefit from its blessing. Since the days of imperialism and colonialism, the Congo and its people have had their resources snatched away from them. Their land has become no more than a playground for other countries and groups as they instigate conflicts only so that they can reap the benefits, giving the Congolese people nothing in return. The Congo was blessed with cobalt that is increasingly desired worldwide, but the greed and exploitation of others has cursed the Congolese people and their land.

Yet, the blessing of cobalt remains as it wasn’t the resource that cursed the Congo, but rather was those who exploited it. Instead, it is the curse of ceaseless imperialism, exploitation, and greed that continues to cast poverty, corruption, and violence over the Congolese state.

When Multilateral Organizations Misalign

By Alex Korfiatis

Criticisms of the United Nations are continuous; the group is accused of constant speeches, but little action. These criticisms are not just levied at the U.N., but also at many multilateral organizations. Former President Trump has spoken on how much money the U.S. gives and how little it receives in return, describing the "utter weakness and incompetence" of the organization. Democrats continue to support it but secretly malign how little the U.N. has done to resolve the fighting in Ukraine, the Israel-Gaza War, or any other major political crisis, such as the Syrian Civil War. However, the very powers given to the U.N. to resolve crises and punish bad actors have been hamstrung by those nations' allies, the superpowers of the globe.

The first organization, the proto-United Nations, was the League of Nations. It started after World War I, in reaction to the millions of lives lost, which caused the countries to try to prevent another global war. President Woodrow Wilson was the main supporter of this organization that provided a platform for countries to peacefully resolve their differences. The problems started nearly immediately; isolationism became the main foreign policy ideology in the United States. The Senate rejected joining an organization that had been set up by them, effectively defanging the League of Nations right as it was trying to get off the ground. In spite of this setback, the League was able to ratify multiple arms reduction treaties such as the Washington Naval Treaty in 1921, a treaty that reduced the tonnage of naval ships.

However, the League of Nations suffered from the same problem the U.N. will suffer from, which is that there is no way to police a country if they do a morally reprehensible action. For example, the League of Nations could not stop Nazi Germany from leaving the League in 1933 nor the Remilitarization of the Rheinland in 1936. Countries such as France and Great Britain did not want war, and, even if they did, their militaries could not compete with Germany's. This severely limited the League of Nations's effectiveness. Italy, emboldened by this lack of a response, invaded the Kingdom of Ethiopia in 1935 and used chemical weapons against the country, which is strictly against the Geneva Convention. The League did impose sanctions on Italy for the invasion, but did not do anything else such as supplying arms to the Ethiopian military. Japan then invaded China in 1937, and while there was again international condemnation and some arms sales to China, there was no military intervention.

After World War II, the victors of the war decided to again have an international organization that could peacefully resolve conflicts to prevent another global war from happening. It had two main levels of governance, the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council. The United Nations General Assembly generally votes on non-compulsory resolutions while the UNSC votes on binding resolutions. The International Court of Justice, which is not to be confused with the International Criminal Court, is a U.N. organ where countries can bring legal cases against each other. This court rose to prominence in 2024 when Palestine, along with many other countries, brought a legal case of genocide

against Israel.

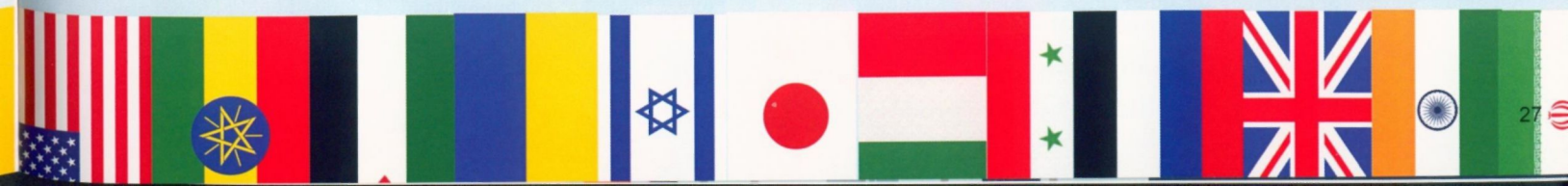
The U.N.'s actual power resides in the UNSC, but it is constrained by how it is structured. In its defense, the UNSC can authorize military intervention. For example, the U.N. did airstrikes against Libya in 2011. It also imposed sanctions against North Korea and Iran for their nuclear weapons programs. The UNSC has 15 members in a two-tiered system, where the victors of World War II, the U.S., China, France, Russia, and Britain, or the P5, occupy the higher tier. Any single country of those five is able to veto any motion that goes through the UNSC. Through this, any allied country of these nations can be protected from sanctions relief, such as Syria and Israel, protected by the United States and Russia, respectively. According to the Washington Post, Syria was constantly protected from sanctions and the imposition of a no-fly zone by the United Nations because Russia and China vetoed the motions. As Syria massacred its own people, the U.N. could not do anything because of intervention from one of the P5. All of the attempts at a peaceful resolution to the Syrian Civil War, sponsored by the U.N. and other nations, failed. Russia continued to defend Syria and then formally joined the intervention on the government's side. The United States mirrored Russia's posture in its support for Israel during its many campaigns against the Palestinians. Since the 2023 Israel-Gaza War started, according to the NYT, the U.S. has vetoed calls for ceasefire at least three times, the latest on February 20, 2024. In that vote, thirteen other nations supported the resolution, while Britain abstained from voting, showing the power of the U.S.'s veto.

Both of these events show how the U.N. can be ineffective. If a country has good relations with a member of the P5, then they can be exempt from international reactions. Sanctions are not effective unless they are employed by all nations. For example, according to Bloomberg, Russia is allegedly using countries such as India, Iran, and those in Central Asia to skirt sanctions. Democratic nations and their allies could put sanctions on a bad actor, but without full compliance of all members, the effort fails. Military intervention to help topple a dictator is rarely used, with the last major case occurring 13 years ago in Libya against Muammar Gaddafi. If a country wants to withstand sanctions, it can. The leaders of North Korea, Iran, Taliban-led Afghanistan, and Myanmar all choose to defy sanctions and choose to not engage with the larger international community. Since these dictatorships put the sanctions' effects on their people, the leaders can continue their policies. Western powers also have seen that military intervention creates more problems, such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Libya all having their civil wars be lengthened after intervention commences, disincentivizing military powers from taking that action in the future. Countries then can continue their policies for effectively the same reason Nazi Germany, Japan, and Italy did 80 years ago — no one will do anything drastic to stop them.

The International Court of Justice is also ineffective in dealing with international disputes. The International Court of Justice had two relevant cases of genocide, where *Gambia v. Myanmar* was brought to protect Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims from persecution. The case is still ongoing. A more recent and famous case, *South Africa v. Israel* was brought forth to protect Palestinian civilians in Gaza. If a country does not adhere to an ICJ ruling, then enforcement is brought to the UNSC. The UNSC then has the same problems of having a large country protect a smaller one, bringing us back to the original point. For example, in *Nicaragua v. United States*, the ICJ ruled against the U.S. Since the U.S. did not give reparations as stipulated, enforcement then was sent to the UNSC. The UNSC's resolution was then vetoed by the United States. The veto caused no enforcement mechanism to be used against the U.S. This example shows countries can just ignore lawsuits and the rule of law by being a member, or allied to, a P5 country.

The International Criminal Court has a different problem: a lack of extradition. The ICC brings charges against war criminals. High-profile cases, such as against Rwanda or Serbia, were brought in the late 1990s and 2000s. However, this only happened when the countries that war criminals resided in allowed them to be extradited. If a country's leader is in power but is wanted in an ICC investigation, the country does not have to give him up. For example, according to the BBC, Vladimir Putin is wanted by the ICC for crimes committed in Ukraine, but the Russian government will not allow his extradition. The ICC has the same problem as the ICJ and the U.N., where it is reliant on countries acting in global self-interest, rather than their own, which in most cases does not happen.

We are sitting on a crossroads of U.N. reform. The scale and scope of armed conflicts continue to rise, and countries are increasingly emboldened to use military warfare. This is the same situation the League of Nations went through in between the two World Wars. The best way to make the U.N. more effective is by ending the veto power of the UNSC. If the P5's veto power is limited and shifted to a more plurality-focused vote, that would allow votes to go through even if not every member agrees. Giving one state all that power just creates friction and inaction. In order to deal with this lack of action, the United Nations must be reformed.



Motherhood or Medicine? American Medical Education Won't Let Women in Healthcare Have Both

By Sara Parikh

During a time when women were seldom seen in higher education, especially in medical schools, Saint Louis University history was made in 1952, when its medical school graduated its first female doctor, Dr. Mary Frances Nawrocki McGinnis. In 1947, at the Yale School of Medicine, women only made up 8% of the students; by 1994, this number rose to 58%, a shift present in many medical institutions across the United States. But for the majority of medical school history in the country, the typical medical student was a single, white male who lived at the hospital alongside other medical trainees, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Today, the demographic of medical students has become increasingly diverse, but the medical education system has failed to keep up. Numerous marginalized groups of medical students encounter unequal treatment within the medical education system. Women, especially those who are mothers, are one such group disproportionately affected by discrimination.

The choice to embark on parenthood holds significant weight, particularly for aspiring female physicians who invest their late 20s and early 30s in medical education and residency. For women, this period aligns with their peak reproductive years, as noted by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Thus, women are forced to navigate the dilemma of prioritizing motherhood or their medical career, or attempting to juggle both, a feat fraught with challenges including declining mental and physical health, as well as gender-based discrimination. While the notion that women can seamlessly manage both roles may sound inspiring, it overlooks the myriad qualifications and circumstances required to balance motherhood with medical training. The reality is that such a balancing act comes at a significant cost. While pulling all-nighters to study and working overnight shifts, the mother will sacrifice time with her child and complicate postpartum recovery. While caring for her child and her health, she may fall behind in her academics, research, and residency training, accompanied by judgment from peers and superiors. Additionally, with little control over rotation and training schedules and where one gets matched for residency, it is difficult to make and maintain a stable plan for a family. This begins to explain why, per the AAMC, generations of women didn't get pregnant during medical school or residency because of the discrimination they faced — a pattern still pervasive today.

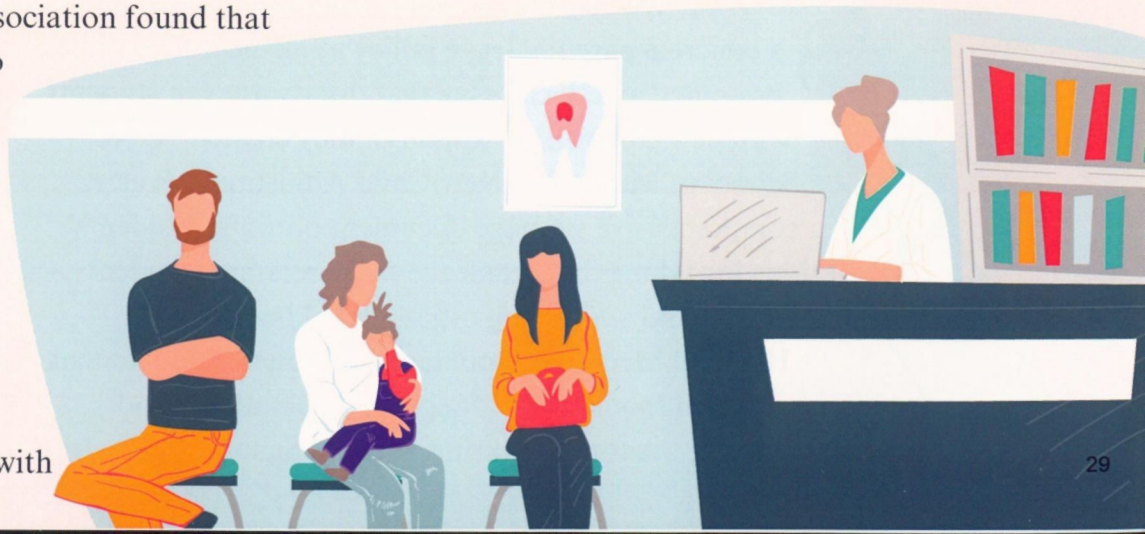
TikTok influencer Dayan, a very bright medical student, initially launched her account as a platform for sharing MCAT and study tips. However, as she progressed into medical school and became pregnant, her content shifted towards offering guidance on navigating pregnancy while pursuing a medical education. Unfortunately, this transition was accompanied by accounts of discrimination she encountered from faculty members. For instance, when Dayan was 15 weeks pregnant, she approached

the dean to discuss accommodation options. Instead of receiving support, she alleges that she was shamed for her pregnancy and labeled as entitled for requesting accommodations. The dean presented her with only two options: take a leave of absence or return to class the day after delivering her baby. Furthermore, her request for a C-section to be considered an excused absence was denied, with the justification that pregnancy is a choice, not an emergency.

After months of battling with her school while sacrificing her mental and physical health, Dayan felt that there was no option other than dropping out of medical school. Her profile has now transitioned into a lifestyle blog of a stay-at-home mom. Despite Dayan's expressed contentment in her role as a stay-at-home mom and the relief it offers from the toxic environment of medical school, she still misses medical school and remains saddened by the abandonment of her medical career ambitions. It hurts to see her career goals severely halted simply because she chose to start a family and had a bad experience with the dean. While a disheartening story, her dedication to her values serves as a reminder that feminism is not defined by the mere presence of women in traditionally male-dominated fields. Rather, feminism advocates for equity across all genders. A woman in a "female-dominated" field, such as a stay-at-home mom, is as much of a modern woman as a woman in STEM.

While Dayan's experience might appear unique to her, numerous other women have reported similar difficulties during pregnancy and motherhood while navigating medical education as students and residents. Research published in JAMA Internal Medicine found about 90% of women claimed to have faced discrimination because they were mothers. Many of them found that this was attributed to their pregnancy status or workplace policies on maternity leave. Dr. Deborah Kwolek, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, noticed that many pregnant women in medical school have felt that they are asking for a special favor when requesting time off to give birth and flexibility to care for a new child. Dr. Shirlene Obuobi, M.D., recalls her co-resident being called irresponsible for having a child earlier in her residency. If this same woman was not in healthcare, her decision to start a family in her early 30s would likely not be met with such scrutiny. Moreover, infertility and miscarriage rates in female physicians are almost twice those of the general population, with over 40 % of female surgeons suffering a pregnancy loss, found a study published in the Journal of Women's Health. Due to the physician strain and complications associated with pregnancy, mothers who fell seriously ill became the target of resentment if they missed work while being on bed rest, said Dr. Christina Talerico, M.D.

How can the medical education system subject its students to such demanding conditions, including 80-hour work weeks with 30-hour shifts, physical and mental strain, sleep deprivation, and numerous other challenges, when the healthcare industry itself acknowledges that these practices not only endanger the well-being of healthcare professionals, but also compromise patient care? This toxic culture disproportionately affects the well-being of pregnant and parenting students, potentially driving future doctors away from the profession, as evidenced by Dayan's experience. A survey published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that 39% of general surgeons who were pregnant during residency seriously considered leaving their program and 30% said they would discourage female medical students from a surgical career due to the difficulties of balancing pregnancy and motherhood with



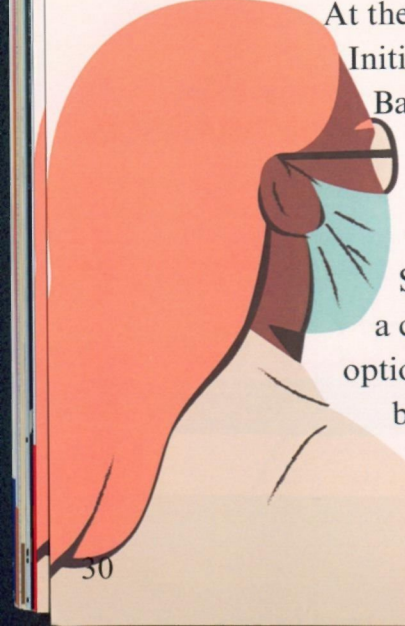
training. Medical education and training makes childbearing and parenting so challenging that we are losing valuable investments in skilled professionals, exacerbating the physician shortage we already face. Therefore, it is now more critical than ever to implement policies and foster a medical culture that prioritizes the retention of physicians.

It was not until very recently that policies supporting residents began to emerge. In 2022, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education began requiring residency programs to provide six weeks of paid parental leave; no such guarantee exists for medical students. From a comparative study published in Academic Medicine,

only about 25% of M.D.-granting schools had a public policy for parental leave during medical school.

The majority of schools had general leave of absence policies but lacked specific provisions for pregnancy and parenting. Consequently, the extent of parental leave may vary depending on the school and the individual's rapport with faculty and staff. Among the schools examined in the study, one had a parental leave policy that provided new parents with only two weeks off during the first two years of medical school and a mere five days during the subsequent two years.

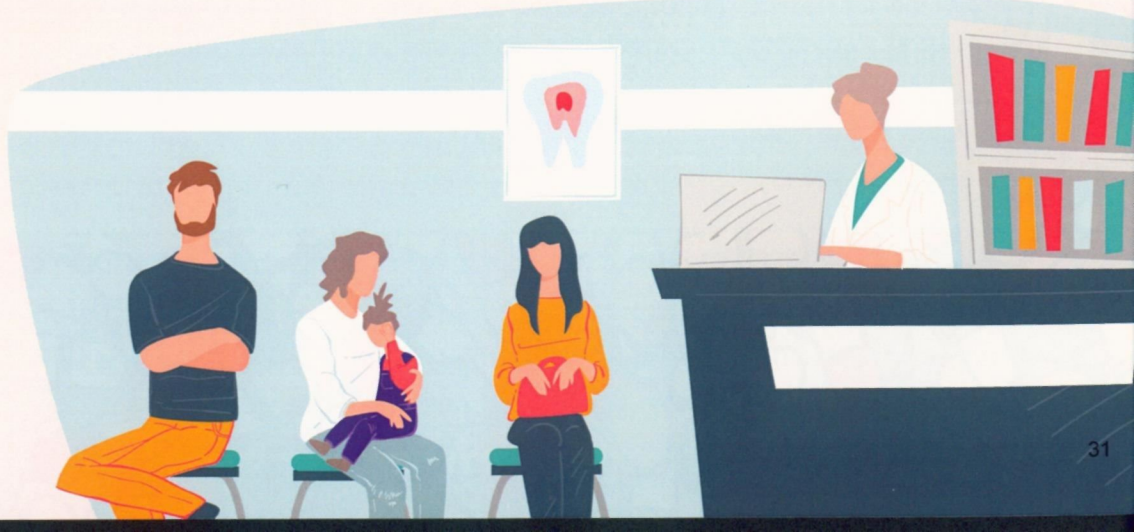
Recent developments in maternal and parental care policies have evolved due to the voices of women in healthcare and student advocacy. Dr. Laura Forese, M.D., MPH, the executive vice president and chief operating officer at NewYork-Presbyterian, has emphasized the immorality of pressuring mothers to delay pregnancy. She believes that supporting residents in their journey to parenthood benefits not only the individuals themselves but also enhances patient care and contributes to the overall improvement of healthcare. Under Forese's leadership, NewYork-Presbyterian implemented a paid parental leave policy allowing parents to take additional time off in a method unique to their circumstances. In developing this policy, they collaborated closely with graduate medical education leadership to ensure that residents continued to receive high-quality training. Forese articulated that the goal of this policy is to allow residents "the peace of mind and resources to start and nurture their families … [as] they are not only caregivers at our hospital but at home, too."



At the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, the Family Support Initiative group was founded by students Lindsey "Lou" Gaghan and Bao-Tran "BT" Parker. Gaghan and Parker felt that the lack of a concrete parental leave policy at medical schools presented an ethical issue that disadvantaged students with new children. In response, they created "UNC School of Medicine's New Child Adjustment Policy," a comprehensive six-page document outlining students' options for taking parental leave while retaining student benefits and addressing other related benefits. The Harvard Medical School has a section of their student handbook titled "Pregnancy, Childbirth and Adoption during Medical School"

clearly outlining what parenting procedures may look like during each phase of medical school. Both UNC and Harvard offer information on departments that can provide additional support and offer recommendations tailored to the health of parents and their children. Today, UNC and Harvard are among a minority of US medical schools that have an accessible parental leave policy. In contrast, at SLU's School of Medicine, there is no explicit parental leave policy. Instead, in parenthesis, "maternity leave" is merely mentioned as an example of a "personal leave of absence." And even more unclear, at the WashU School of Medicine, there is no mention of keywords related to parenting. Unfortunately, our medical schools in Saint Louis reflect an outdated and misogynistic notion that medical students cannot balance parenthood, despite the fact that many are in their 20s and 30s.

Medical students and physicians are diverse individuals with interests and ambitions beyond the realm of medicine, but we are connected through a joint commitment to the health of communities. I am called to medicine as I hope to foster meaningful relationships with patients and empower them by advocating for their mental and physical well-being. However, I fear that the current medical climate may undermine my personal relationships and aspirations for a family, potentially making me lose sight of my vocation. Yet, I strongly believe that this culture can evolve if the medical system commits to supporting and embracing its diverse cohort. At SLU, renowned for its medical education rooted in compassionate Jesuit values, our pre-health students must strive to embody empathetic leadership and dedicate themselves to reshaping the field for the betterment of patients, fellow students, and healthcare professionals alike. As society evolves, medical education must adapt to nurture passionate healthcare professionals and promote equity and inclusivity. It is imperative that we strive to create an environment where individuals can thrive both personally and professionally, fostering a generation of healthcare professionals dedicated to holistic patient care and societal progress.

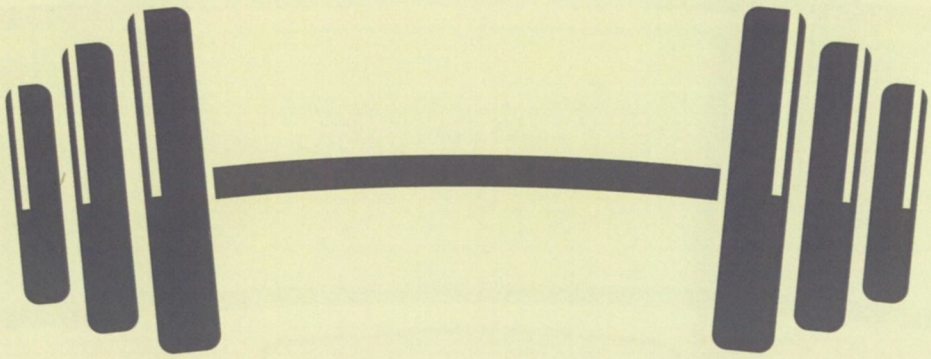


OUTFLANKING OBESITY: AT THE CROSSROADS OF GLP-1 AGONISTS AND LIFESTYLE REFORM

By Shiv Goel

There are many considerations in outflanking obesity which bring us to the crossroads of pharmacotherapy and lifestyle change, and where social justice lies in all of it. Obesity is defined as a body mass index of 30 or greater and is recognized by the National Institute of Health as a chronic disease and enormous public health concern that afflicts more than a billion adults and children worldwide. Obesity has a complex of contributing factors including dietary intake, physical activity levels, genetic susceptibility, metabolism, environment, and psychosocial factors. As healthcare professionals and patients grapple with strategies for obesity management, a controversy unfolds. The debate surrounding obesity management ranges from the efficacy, safety, and cost of pharmacotherapy to the accessibility and sustainability of lifestyle reform.

I remember rotating in the internal medicine clinic, where I found a Hispanic woman waiting in a patient room. She was the mother of four hijas and grandmother of five nietas. She had several medical concerns, but they converged to one compelling narrative. She had been trying to lose weight for years but never made much progress, which may have been attributable to her difficult immigrant life. Eventually, tears filled her eyes as she told her story about her father in Mexico who had been overweight and developed diabetes. She spoke about his amputation and sudden death, leaving 16 children fatherless. She decided she had no choice but to lose weight because she was afraid to follow in her father's footsteps. She started Rybelsus, an oral semaglutide for obesity and diabetes. She found it helpful, as she said it curbed her appetite, causing her to eat less. However, she also noticed lots of hair falling out in the shower and accumulating on her hairbrush. Initially, she panicked at the sight of this. However, she became silent after looking down at her shrinking waistline. After years of seeing her general practitioner and being told to "just lose the weight," leaving her feeling helpless, inadequate, and ashamed, she was now at a turning point in her life. She explained how she had become a role model for others in her family, as all of them were overweight. Her granddaughters looked up to her as the matriarch to be emulated and followed. She took great pride in being an inspiration and guiding light for the younger generations and felt it was one of the greatest gifts to give them. They became hopeful and were inspired. Within a year, her two daughters and granddaughters had lost weight without medications. I later discovered that the whole family



had purchased a health club membership together. This patient was living proof that even after generations of obesity, change was possible. Her family would have less risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other related disorders. After that patient encounter, it became clear to me that obesity is not just a physical disease, but a complex psychosocial phenomenon influenced by social determinants of health.

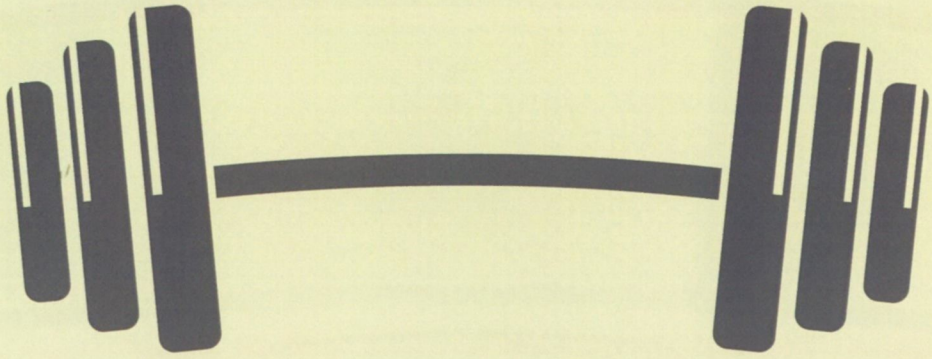
Stories like these complicate being at the crossroads of treating obesity with its copious comorbidities versus the adverse effects and many unknown risks of pharmacotherapy, such as using GLP-1 agonists. These mimic the GLP-1 hormone, which secretes insulin in the pancreas, inhibits glucagon secretion from the liver, slows gastric emptying, and suppresses appetite in the hypothalamus. When considering recent research with GLP-1 agonists and scientific opinions to evidence-based results in practice, manufacturer warnings, adverse effects as seen by E.R. physicians, and patient preferences, deciphering a path at this complex intersection is challenging. It is critical to weigh the risks and benefits of pharmacotherapy in the short and long term. The cost of medications and their risks compared to the healthcare burden of obesity from comorbidities with doctor visits, hospitalizations, surgeries, and additional medications is another confounding factor. Obesity predisposes hypertension, cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, obstructive sleep apnea, and osteoarthritis. In adults, productivity and employment could be affected. In teens, obesity can result in bullying and potentially long-lasting self-esteem or psychological issues. The debate as to obesity management encompasses a spectrum of perspectives ranging from the ease and convenience of medication to the natural health benefits of sustaining lifestyle changes. Are GLP-1 agonists the answer?

When discerning what path to take to lose weight, many may choose the route of making lifestyle changes through diet and exercise as opposed to modern methods that entail pharmaceuticals due to their long-term potential, whole-body health value, and empowering sense of accomplishment. An obesity medicine specialist outlines six steps for weight management: 1.) keeping a food log for one week, 2.) eating every few hours, 3.) eating from a variety of food groups, 4.) drinking lots of water, 5.) working on improving mental well-being, and 6.) incorporating daily aerobic and resistance exercise. This details the simplicity of making dietary and activity changes to improve health, but there are a variety of factors that make making these changes difficult for many. An article from the Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine journal asserts that while losing weight is beneficial for health, the aerobic and strength-training exercises leading to weight loss are extremely crucial for a long life. An active lifestyle is key to cardiovascular disease prevention. Aerobic exercise and weight training are associated with improved metabolism and decreased inflammation, improved blood lipid profiles, increased insulin sensitivity, decreased systemic chronic inflammation, and promoted cellular maintenance and repair. Exercise training is associated with vascular health, such as endothelial cell integrity and function, and anti-atherogenic and structural adaptations. Therefore, daily exercise not only helps short-term weight loss, but also increases

metabolism, decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease, and has a multitude of health benefits in the long term.

Aside from the numerous health benefits of making lifestyle changes, patients prefer natural methods of weight loss compared to more advanced medical interventions. An article published in the Obesity Science and Practice journal conducted a study investigating preferred methods of treatment for patients with obesity complications. The article emphasizes the importance of patient preference and understanding decision-making with patients' values and goals. The results of this study revealed that 39% of participants chose nutritional therapy, 27% chose bariatric surgery, 24% chose pharmacotherapy, 6% chose pharmacotherapy combined with nutritional therapy, and 3% of participants chose no intervention. In summary, making lifestyle changes is preferred by certain patients over pharmacotherapy, has health benefits that extend beyond weight loss, and can be accomplished through simple steps.

Another reason why individuals may avoid pharmacotherapy and change daily habits instead of taking medications is due to their side effects and financial inaccessibility. Eli Lilly is a popular company that sells Tirzepatide, or Mounjaro, an injectable semaglutide used for weight loss. After inspecting the safety sheet from the Mounjaro website, it is clear there are many potential adverse effects. By providing safety warnings, patients and their prescribing physicians become aware of the downsides of using medication to treat disease, enabling patients to make informed decisions about whether or not they want to take this medication for weight loss. Tirzepatide's safety sheet warns of thyroid cancer, throat hoarseness, trouble swallowing, shortness of breath, pancreatitis, and hypoglycemia. As with any medication, there is a risk for severe allergic reactions. The plentiful amount of serious health risks from taking medications for weight loss encourages many to follow the path of diet and exercise, as there are virtually no side effects from adopting lifestyle changes. Additionally, many patients have presented to the emergency room due to side effects from GLP-1 agonists. A review article from The American Journal of Emergency Medicine, discusses occurrences seen in the E.R. with GLP-1 agonist use, bringing adverse reactions into an immediate clinical context of what can be seen in the emergency room after using GLP-1 agonists. It describes that while GLP-1 agonists can control glucose and aid in weight loss, there are many adverse effects, the most common being gastrointestinal-related. Due to medication shortages, people attempt to



obtain these medications from non-licensed or unregulated agents, increasing possible risks and adverse effects. The danger of these drugs is that when they are not available from large manufacturers, pharmacies are "compounding" them with unknown non-FDA approved mixtures, adulterating the drugs. This is such a problem that Novo Nordisk has already settled lawsuits with pharmacies compounding GLP-1 agonists, but individuals are choosing the cheaper compounded medications over the manufacturer brands. To conclude, current information on the real-world occurrence of the side effects of pharmacotherapy to treat obesity leads many to avoid medications and take the traditional route toward weight loss.

At the confluence of the controversy, is that making significant lifestyle changes can be very difficult, particularly for those with hectic schedules, limited financial or other resources, or underlying medical conditions that hinder physical activity.

Life difficulties can make the time investment required for lifestyle changes, meal planning, purchasing fresh ingredients versus frozen foods, engaging in daily exercise, quitting unhealthy habits such as drinking and smoking, and staying consistent challenging for many.

There are also financial considerations. Eating fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and dairy daily costs more than ready-made meals. Health club memberships can be expensive and require access to transportation. Guidance from nutritionists, physical trainers, and classes, can also be cost-prohibitive. Furthermore, many individuals with physical limitations such as injuries, arthritis, or disabilities may not be able to exercise. The aging population or those with disabilities may be unable to perform exercise routines or drive safely to a gym. All of this exposes the issues of social injustice in curing obesity.

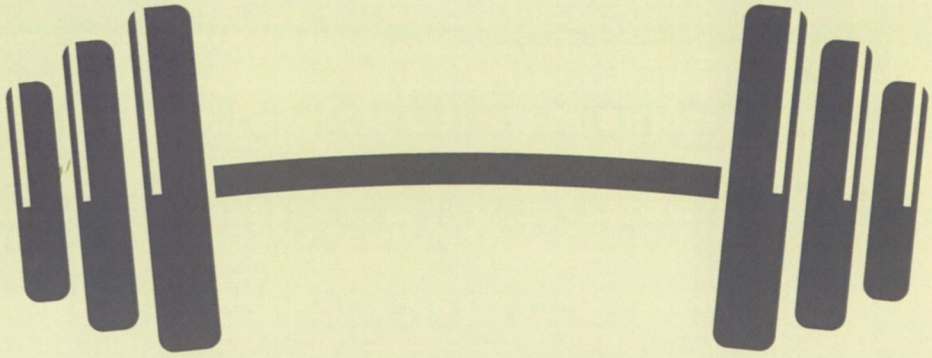
An article from Healthline, a health and wellness resource in community medicine and public health, describes an integrated approach. The lead study author, Michael A. Weintraub, M.D., presented these findings at the Endocrine Society's annual meeting. This article describes a study analyzing data from 428

patients at an academic weight management center. It describes

a balanced approach in which lifestyle changes and weight loss medications help lead to a decrease in weight.

The study demonstrates that anti-obesity medications combined with lifestyle changes can achieve a weight loss of 10% body weight long-term. If weight loss is sustained, metabolic abnormalities can be reversed producing benefits in patients with type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other diseases in which obesity is the root cause. All patients received counseling on following a low-glycemic diet and exercise by an obesity medicine specialist during their office visits and counseling with a dietitian. The medical intervention included FDA-approved and off-label weight-loss medications that included metformin, phentermine, and topiramate. By their final visit, patients were using an average of two medications for weight management and followed for about five years. Participants maintained an average weight loss of 10.7% with low side effects due to medications. The article emphasizes that weight loss could result in a decrease in weight-related disease, a decrease in the cost of medications, a decrease in disability, and future complications of comorbidities. It states that although all medications have potential side effects, the main point is whether the benefits of pharmacotherapy outweigh its risks. In addressing obesity, the benefits can outweigh the risks as metformin, topiramate, and phentermine have been used for many years safely.

Given the complexities, nuance, and various vantage points in addressing obesity, a single objective becomes clear: action is needed. The greatest injustice is not recognizing the hazards and implications of obesity and knowing that there are a multitude of treatment options available.



It is important to understand that socioeconomic status is the primary determinant of health, and both methods of weight loss have socioeconomic barriers, such as a lack of finances to purchase pharmaceuticals that assist in weight loss or healthy food and a gym membership to make lifestyle changes.

Each person's life circumstance and physiological makeup are unique, but so are treatment plans, whether they involve pharmacotherapy, lifestyle reform, intricate combinations of both, or alternative interventions. Embracing diversity in treatment strategies respects this complexity, and it empowers individuals to navigate distinct paths toward improving overall health and well-being.

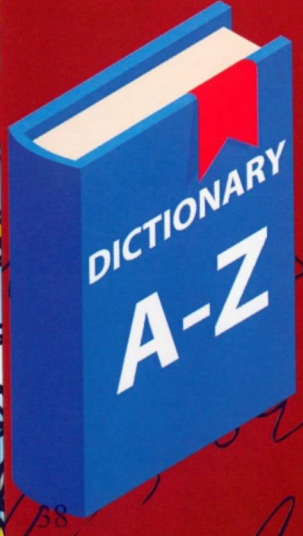
Speaking to a Higher Standard: The Importance of Examining Our Language

By Aileen O'Connor

Elevator small talk notwithstanding, speaking is generally considered a mindless task. Most people utter thousands of words every single day, many of which will be forgotten just minutes later. Children are taught early on to think before they speak, but adults' inability to follow this lesson is evident every time we tell a waitress that we hope she enjoys her meal too. These small blunders are inevitable; every passing conversation doesn't necessarily require our full attention. However, problems arise when people begin to treat language in general as something stagnant and isolated that doesn't require a second thought. Outside of the often rigid expectations of writing classes, we give little thought to each individual word we use, instead seeing them as building blocks towards a larger idea. We look for the word or phrase that is the most familiar and ignore the weight, history, and connotation of each word we use, effectively giving up some control over one of our most powerful tools — our voices.

The importance of language, and specifically its relationship with perception, has been heavily debated for decades by linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists. There is a growing interest (even among those outside these fields) in theories such as linguistic relativity, which claims that the language we speak shapes how we perceive reality. Due to this rise in popularity, some theories receive often justified criticisms that they have become misunderstood or seen as absolute truth rather than a starting point for studying the impact of language. Rather than attempting to parse through theories that have been a point of debate for decades, I want to examine more generally a few instances in which language can either limit or promote advancements in social justice. As we work to fight for a more inclusive world through overt methods such as political and economic reform, it is vital to recognize the impact of our daily speech, especially when discussing serious contemporary issues. Words are our primary tools of communication, and how we convey our thoughts is directly tied to our message itself.

The importance of language has been explored in pop culture on numerous occasions. One of the most

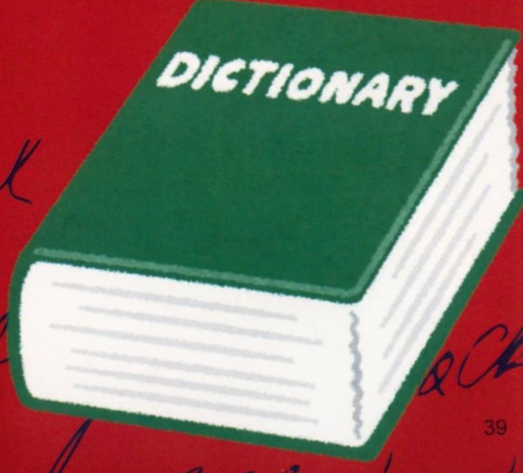


prominent examples is Dennis Villenueve's 2016 film "Arrival," in which a woman encounters an alien species that uses circular sentence structures. As she learns to understand their language, she begins to experience time in a similar nonlinear sense. The movie uses fiction to amplify the power that words have over us — while no language could distort our perception of the world to that extent, the movie lends itself to discussions of how words can influence what we prioritize and notice first.

Few individual words have caused as much recent controversy as the pronoun "they," used in place of gendered pronouns to indicate that the subject's gender is unknown or exists outside of the traditional binary. Despite the Oxford English Dictionary's evidence that "they" has been used to describe a single individual for centuries, this usage remains a controversial topic. The notion that using "they" to refer to one individual is not grammatically correct is used as an argument by transphobic critics across the board, from professional reports to anonymous online commenters. Grammar conventions can be important as they allow speakers of a shared language to clearly communicate ideas. However, grammar has never been and never will be fixed or rigid. Even if there wasn't ample historical evidence for the usage of the singular "they," any venture into texts from a different time period or location, even within the English-speaking world, can provide evidence of English's fluidity over time. Shakespeare and Austen both wrote in English, yet one would immediately stand out if they attempted to speak casually in either of their styles today. As our culture, priorities, and perspectives change, so do our language conventions. More recently, technology has come to play an ever-expanding role in our lives. Alongside it, countless new words have come about over the last few decades to describe innovations. These words didn't exist, at least with their current meanings, until there was a need for them. Language works for us and adapts to what we feel is important to convey.

There are, of course, limitations to this fluidity, specifically when it comes to the origins of words or phrases. Just as grammar conventions change over time, the definitions and usage of many words in the English language have changed over hundreds of years of linguistic evolution. America's ongoing reckoning with systemic racism and the impacts of years of slavery and segregation have led to recent calls to re-evaluate words in our daily lexicon that have a history in racism. As with many aspects of American history and culture, an exploration into the history of many common terms unearths their racist history. Some are more explicit than others — it doesn't take much research to recognize that "lynch-mob," a term used casually to describe a group of critics attempting to tarnish an opponent's reputation, has racist origins.

Others are less obvious, but have similarly harmful impacts — the National Museum of American History explains that "cake walk," for instance, comes from a 19th century dance slaves were forced to perform, but is now a colloquial phrase describing an easy task. Activists have pushed for these words to be removed from common vocabulary, or at least for people to acknowledge their harmful histories. While these phrases are not necessarily racial slurs, their continued usage perpetuates negative stereotypes



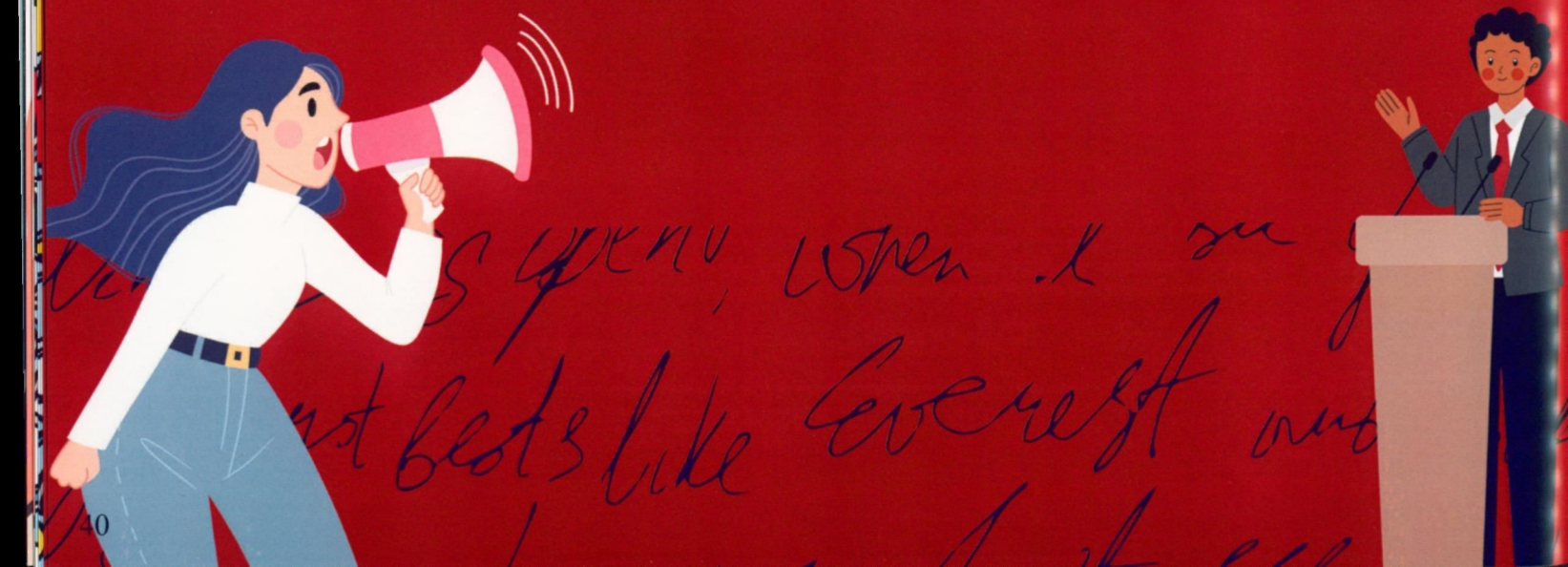
by tapping into the historical setting in which they were introduced. These arguments have received some pushback — critics feel that their language is being policed, that these terms have taken on entirely new meanings, or simply that "it isn't that deep." The argument that any word is "just a word" ignores its history and any harm it might have caused. This further points to the necessity of understanding that words are not just a means of sharing a message — they make up the message itself, and when you knowingly use a word that has harmful implications it only reaffirms the negative connotation.

The weight of words, and their power to influence our perception, is especially evident in news coverage.

When major news organizations, or even our own university, avoid using the word "genocide" in reference to attacks on Gaza by Israel, those with limited background knowledge are presented with an incomplete picture that ignores the history and power dynamics at play in these attacks.

Similarly, journalists have said that the victims of these attacks "died" rather than admitting that they were "murdered." These choices are often intentional, used in an attempt to minimize the atrocities being committed. Even if the decision is not consciously malicious, manipulating language to soften the impact of the death of thousands of people shows negligence as a journalist. Few words are truly interchangeable — even simple synonyms such as easy, simple, and effortless have slightly different connotations. It is especially important for those responsible for sharing news with others to understand the impact of each word they choose.

It remains important to recognize the impact words can have as a consumer of information. Simply repeating what we hear without thinking about the implications of the language used or avoiding aspects of a situation that are difficult to talk about is sometimes the easiest thing to do in the moment. However, this leads to a spiraling cycle of misunderstanding. We are filled with outrage when it is determined that a widely circulated image was edited, yet when headlines are constructed using equally deceitful strategies it is seen as simply a stylistic choice. Holding the words we share and consume to a higher standard allows us to be more specific in our understanding of and actions surrounding important events and movements.



The Witch is Back!

FEMINIST MEDIA, APPROPRIATION, & WITCHCRAFT

BY WERONIKA GRAJDURA

For centuries, humans have created a mythos around women and men who have magical abilities beyond earthly capabilities. Typically associated with spells and hexes, deals with the devil, and sexual promiscuity, these figures would come to be the embodiment of fear and evil in Western culture. This fear and resentment of those suspected to be witches would often come to a graphic climax, such as the execution of the European and American witch trials from the 15th to the 18th century. Now, witches have found a different association within pop-culture and media. While some still view witches as immoral and unholy, others have come to embrace witchcraft and Wicca as religions to practice or as aesthetics to dress by. This interest did not spawn overnight, and instead came as a result of decades of positive and empowering media around witchcraft. However, with this renewed interest there is a fine line between appreciation and appropriation of different cultural practices and beliefs.

Growing up, you have likely encountered two different kinds of witches portrayed in the media. One is the stereotypical pointy hat, evil cackle, riding around on a broomstick evil witch, like the Wicked Witch of the West from "The Wizard of Oz." This version is often associated with anti-Semetic imagery from time periods during which both Jewish people and witches were being persecuted. However, there now exists a more modernized version of this kind of witch. Think of your favorite female protagonist from any piece of media revolving around witchcraft: Hermione Granger from "Harry Potter," Sabrina from "Sabrina the Teenage Witch," Samantha from "Bewitched," Alex Russo from "Wizards of Waverly Place," and more! These characters are distinct from their green and pointy hat wearing predecessors. Now, witches in the media are no longer the embodiment of evil and jealousy; they have become more complex and deeper characters that many of us have grown up loving. Some traditionally "evil" witches have since seen their stories rewritten. For example, the Wicked Witch of the West from "The Wizard of Oz" or Maleficent from "Sleeping Beauty." Both of these characters have modern adaptations of their stories in which they were highlighted as the main characters. Not only were they recentered, but they were recast as morally complex anti-heros that went against societal biases, whose original intentions were misunderstood by audiences.

This shift seen in the media's portrayal of witches coincides with the improved treatment of women in

society at large. As Western society has changed their view of women and women's roles, so has media depictions of women (including witches). Professor Helen A. Berger, a Scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center, has done extensive research on the portrayal of witchcraft in the 21st century, exploring everything from its historical origins ,its feminist ties, to the effect of social media on the practice. Berger typically examines those that practice Wicca, a nature-based, polytheistic religion.

When regarding the primary association of Wicca and witches to femininity, Berger looks back to history and the religion itself. Wicca draws from pre-Christian European beliefs, but it also draws inspiration from a variety of cultures and time periods. Most witches within Wicca are women. Historically, different texts associated women with being witches, as women were "more likely to be the target of the devil because they were weaker, both spiritually and emotionally."

"Daemonologie," written by King James VI of Scotland and published in 1597, set many of the beliefs around witches, especially those preceding the 16th and 17th century witch hunts, including the belief that witches gained their powers through the exchange of sex with the Devil. In contrast, Berger found that non-European cultures often have a different type of witchcraft, typically practiced by men, associated with the sorcerer or shaman providing a communal good. Moving into the 20th and 21st centuries, Berger has found an association between feminism and witchcraft, stating,

"Witchcraft is part of their feminism or 'girl-power.' We first saw this in the 1960's and 70's during the Women's Movement … It's the notion that these words that have been used against women were taken back in and refashioned into something that we could use that would be positive."

The feminist movement, and these new interpretations of witchcraft, are thus reflected in the media, with each decade forming their ideas of witches based on feminine expectations. For example, the 1960s saw Samantha from "Bewitched," who fits into this concept of a "good witch" but also doubles as the societal ideal of a house-wife. In contrast, as feminist ideology has become more ingrained in society, a more diverse cast of witches has been seen within media, often being praised as very independent and inspirational. Some still lean into stereotypical portrayals of witches, such as the Sanderson sisters from "Hocus Pocus," while other portrayals focus on modern girls and women who are trying their best to face whatever conflicts arise, such as "Sabrina the Teenage Witch." Depictions of witches are often partnered with concepts of feminine bonds, portraying the complexities behind feminine friendships and relationships, such as the Halliwell sisters from "Charmed," the Owens sisters from "Practical Magic," or the girls from "The Craft." Nonetheless, feminist thought has greatly impacted how women are treated both in life and in media, with their witchy counterparts experiencing similar treatments.

With this feminist reclaiming of witchcraft and new inspirational models of witches within the media, it was only a matter of time before these practices, beliefs, and aesthetics started to be used by more and more people. The amount of people within the U.S. and other parts of the world that have identified themselves as witches in some capacity has increased over the years. A 2014 Pew Research Center study found that 0.4% of Americans identified with being New Age, 0.3% being either Pagan or Wiccan. Berger claims that witchcraft in the U.S. has risen from 134,000 users in 2001 to nearly 2 million in 2021. With the practice of witchcraft on the rise, this has been reflected in what is seen on social media and in stores. If you go to your local Five Below or Half-Priced Books, you may stumble across a section dedicated to witchcraft or "witch-adjacent" items. This section ranges from different "spell books," instructions of how to properly read Tarot cards, sets of crystals, and more, with some of these items not having direct ties to witchcraft or Wicca at all.

It's almost surprising to consider that these sections exist so openly and visibly within our world without much discussion. Despite its new found resurgence, witchcraft is still somewhat viewed negatively within U.S. society. Witchcraft as both a practice and a religion isn't always viewed as a legitimate belief within society, and, at its worst, it's interpreted as a corrupting and evil force. For example, the "Harry Potter" series commonly finds itself on banned books list because of its association with witchcraft and the fear that it corrupts children. On the other hand, many don't view Wicca or Pagan religions as legitimate and instead view them as things of the past or the butt of a joke.

Nonetheless, witchcraft is on the rise! These practices and beliefs have found a way to permeate social media, with many sharing how to partake in different spells. However, this comes with negative consequences. Many view some of these practices promoted as appropriative, especially when users don't fully understand their cultural background. One Reddit user voiced concern over the misuse of witchcraft on TikTok, writing "[It's] making the way we choose to live our lives present as a joke." They believe that false representations and jokes are "really damaging to a young community of spiritual people finding their pagan paths in life."

The overuse of witchcraft on social media has not only appropriated the belief itself, but has also appropriated other cultural practices outside of the religion. One of these common practices is "smudging," the burning of herbs, more specifically white sage, to cleanse a space or person. The practice has come under fire in recent years due to its appropriation by social media and non-Native American practitioners. To start, smudging originated with numerous Native American and Indigenous communities, with many believing that those that take up the practice aren't aware of its history, intentions, or Indigenous cultural erasure through colonization. When asked about this practice, Blackfeet tribe member Rosalyn LaPier, who works as an ethnobotanist, environmental historian and professor of history at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, stated that Americans often "simplify and reduce [cultural practices] down to the point where it's not identifiable anymore by the people in that group."

White sage and other materials for smudging have found their way into kits and "guides" to witchcraft and smudging. In 2018, Sephorah canceled its "Witch Starter Kit," which included items like Tarot cards, crystals, fragrances, and white sage, after receiving backlash online for the cultural appropriation of these practices and turning one's cultural beliefs into a decor piece for others. This increased popularity of smudging has also led to concerns over the sourcing and supply of white sage.

The herb is now being over-harvested and depleted, making it more difficult and expensive to purchase the herb. This popularization of white sage through appropriative means also indicates that the plant is being overharvested through unethical means.

White sage is only one example of these practices from other cultures that are being popularized and appropriated through this desire to fit into the witchcraft aesthetic. Other examples include the origins of Tarot card reading within Roma culture or the making and use of black salt, which came from Hoodoo in enslaved African Americans populations. One article that speaks on the appropriation of white sage directly responds to this problem,

> "If you're non-Native, you do not have the right to buy, wear or use important, sacred ceremonial items — it's that simple."

"As I've said before, you can show your admiration for Indigenous People and their culture by purchasing clothing, jewelry, shoes, music and artwork, etc that has specifically been created by them to be shared, Native creators want to see people cherish their work, you can't, however, help yourself to their spiritual identity."

The point is clear: if you aren't spiritually part of this culture, do not partake. While this may seem extreme to some people, it's also important to acknowledge that the practice of smudging isn't actually within Wicca, with Wicca using smoke cleansing with other herbs instead can be done.

The role of witches within society has changed drastically over the past century. While this renewal, changing image, and tie to feminist liberation are all positive aspects of this shift, it is still important to acknowledge the shortcomings, especially when practices become appropriative and commercialized. While some remember Salem, Massachusetts as the site of the horrific tragedy of the witch trials that ended with many innocents dead, "witch city" is now lined up with tourist attractions used for the profits of others, causing residents to become resentful of the floods of tourists that come in every Halloween season.

If you are someone interested in learning more about Wicca and Paganism, make sure you do your due diligence to be respectful of the actual beliefs and history itself. Don't buy overharvested white sage because you saw one TikTok about smudging. Don't try to read Tarot cards while not acknowledging anti-Roma sentiment and thinking "My Big Fat G*psy Wedding" is an accurate portrayal of the culture. Instead, try to find scholarly and historical resources to find out where each practice comes from. Try to find a community of people that are putting in the work in being respectful and accurate within their craft. Do your research and call out appropriation when you see it, or otherwise, don't engage at all.

TRACKING LINES

IN COURT

By Riya Shah

The presidential elections are approaching this fall. Tensions are running high. Aside from anticipating our future elected representatives, some are concerned about election security. Others are focused on campaign financing, disinformation, or misinformation. But there is also the issue of voter disenfranchisement. Voter disenfranchisement refers to issues related to barriers to voting. This extends far past restrictions to early and absentee voting. Voter disenfranchisement includes undemocratic gerrymandering. For years, gerrymandering has influenced which party has control over Congress. Regarding gerrymandering, as stated by the American Bar Association, "the Court itself acknowledges that state and local officials are regularly violating the Constitution, but it has refused to allow any federal judicial remedy." Gerrymandering represents a fundamental distortion of democratic principles. It skews election results by letting politicians choose their votes instead of letting people choose their representatives. It favors larger political parties and weakens the power of certain communities. The federal government should take steps to address gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is the practice of drawing district lines that favor one party over another. Typically, it groups voters who are likely to support the same party or splits areas where opponents have strong support. Thus, it allows politicians to choose their votes instead of voters choosing their representatives fairly. The American Bar Association gives an example: the Wisconsin Assembly. The legislative body, in a "quintessentially purple state," has been controlled by a super-majority of Republicans since the Republican-controlled legislation drew up the map in 2011. Although the Democratic Assembly got more than half the votes statewide in some years, the Republican party won more than 60 percent of the seats. If voters do not get to choose their representatives, the laws and policies that the elected officials pass are therefore not representative of the people.

Gerrymandering has been addressed in Supreme Court cases. The American Bar Association brings up the 1962 decision in Baker v. Carr. The issue was whether population variances among districts in a district map, which can cause voters in less-populated areas to have more voting power than those in highly-populated areas, can be "constitutionally challenged" as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, specifically the Equal Protection Clause. Justice William J. Brennan's majority opinion rejected the argument. He identified two primary scenarios where a constitutional claim may be considered a non-justiciable political question, a matter that the Court thinks is inappropriate for judicial review. The first scenario pertains to instances where the Constitution explicitly delegates certain issues to other branches of government, thereby precluding judicial intervention. An example includes matters related to impeachment. In such cases, the judiciary recognizes the authority of other

branches to address these constitutional obligations which limit its own role.

The second scenario arises when there is a lack of clear and manageable legal standards for resolving a "constitutional controversy." This aspect of the doctrine is particularly relevant in cases involving complex political questions, such as partisan gerrymandering. The Supreme Court's decision in Rucho v. Common Cause exemplifies this aspect of the doctrine. The majority opinion, authored by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., argued that determining the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering would require establishing clear standards for assessing when political bias in redistricting crosses a constitutional threshold. Since such standards were deemed elusive, the Court concluded that partisan gerrymandering presented a non-justiciable political question.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, 74 racially discriminatory or partisan gerrymander cases have been filed against district maps in 27 states as of July 7, 2023. One example is a case filed in Missouri in April 2022. In Berry v. Ashcroft, a Black voter argued that Missouri's congressional map was racially discriminatory in violation of the U.S. Constitution. He stated that the map packs Black voters in MO-1, diluting their voting power and therefore is discriminatory. A panel of judges rejected the claim. They contend that a new congressional map would "significantly disrupt" the 2022 election cycle. They did not provide any opinion on whether the map violated the Constitution.

Gerrymandering has remained a complex problem in the States. The Campaign Legal Center has discussed ways to tackle undemocratic congressional maps. Web tools could be used to identify gerrymandering and incentivize states to redraw maps. Also, independent commissions could be utilized to draw the maps. These would be an organization of individuals separate from the state legislature. In recent years with Michigan and Colorado, voters had called for independent commissions through ballot initiatives. But most importantly, federal legislation should ban gerrymandering by passing the Freedom to Vote Act. This bill includes "standard quantitative measures of partisan fairness" to make sure every vote counts equally and make it easier to dispute an unfair map.

Steps to ensure that gerrymandering is prevented start with us. We should initiate discussions with our elected officials for progress to be made on gerrymandering. This problem is not being resolved on a federal level and therefore states have the power to draw their own maps that may create a disadvantage for certain groups. But most importantly, even if efforts are not spent on advocating for the ban of gerrymandering, we should all vote. Each vote matters and can drastically affect election outcomes. Another takeaway from this article is to showcase an issue that has been acknowledged, but not resolved by Courts. There are tools to help end gerrymandering. Maps should be created to allow voters to decide election outcomes. They should not be created to keep one party in control or prevent a community from giving their votes power.

WHEN BOOKS BURN:

THE WAR ON ACADEMIC WOKENESS

BY CJ EICHENLAUB

What are you afraid of?

The 'not-so-roaring' twenties began as the decade of the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic, a public health crisis that took over one million American lives. We now find ourselves in a worldwide economic crisis, with nearly half of our country experiencing financial hardship. Our federal government has invaded our doctor's offices, funded genocide unapologetically, and has repeatedly displayed that their priority is partisanship, not the wellbeing of our country. The American dream has become a nightmare, indicative of the *Land of the Free*'s greatest fear:

Progress.

It is said that the majority of this century's social and technological progress has occurred within the last decade — we are undergoing an unprecedented rate of change. With such change comes new science, new art, and a radically different understanding of the human condition. This change has primarily been driven by academics, often leaving those who've distanced themselves from college campuses in the dark. According to a recent Gallup News poll, only 36% of Americans express "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education, revealing a staggering degree of distrust in the institutions responsible for shaping our world leaders.

Distrust of higher education is especially prevalent amongst American Conservatives — a recent Pew Research Center survey found that 76% of voters who self-identify as Republican believe that higher education has a negative effect on the United States. Conservative America has long been opposed to scientific authority, decrying it as antithetical to traditional American values. This distrust in science — and academia at large — is the basis of the modern populist movement that has been responsible for discrediting many of America's most important institutions. Trust in the media is at an all-time low; elections are baselessly declared to be fraudulent; sound scientific and social theory is discarded by individuals who haven't themselves stopped to consider its validity. As the world continues to change, paranoia plagues the lives of Americans who find themselves afraid of being left behind.

Capitalizing on Americans' fear of a changing world, an avaricious new generation of political figures

have used this paranoia as a means to grasp on to — and cling to — power.

Just ten years ago, the term "woke" seldom surfaced in political discourse. Today, it's used to demonize the educated left in the eyes of Americans feeling deep saudade for Christian orthodoxy. Reduced from its original form, what once served as a watchword for Black Americans subject to the dangers of white nationalist culture has become ubiquitous throughout modern discourse.

The expectations of "woke" ideology have proven to be, at the very least, undeniably accurate — when we become aware of the overlapping systems of oppression that severely impact the lives of those identifying with minority groups, we learn to become more tolerant of new cultures, and, ultimately, we learn from them. In assessing the efficacy of "woke" ideology on a national scale, one could just look at how our expanding views of sexuality and gender have enabled millions of people to express themselves beyond the constraints of heteronormativity.

Though "wokeness" has been widely recognized, this recognition hasn't necessarily translated into tolerance. To an increasingly vocal ideological minority, "wokeness" is synonymous with "anti-whiteness," and has become a buzzword for all of their anger surrounding a society that's becoming more and more diverse.

The power of the "anti-woke" mob was displayed fruitfully in response to the listing of a course at the University of Chicago titled "The Problem of Whiteness." To those who refused to look beyond the title, this was a course in white hatred. In reality, this course sought to explore the years of scholarly research on the scientific myths and social facts of racial identity. Instead of looking beyond the listing and engaging with the arguments being made, cynical opportunist Daniel Schmidt exploited a vague description of the course to amplify his white, grievance-centered social media persona. By posting the listing alongside identifying information for the post-doctoral fellow offering the course, he enabled hateful personal attacks against an instructor trying to do their job.

"The Problem of Whiteness" is far from an abnormal course-listing at the University of Chicago, an institution that prides itself on academic rigor and promotion of critical inquiry, and houses departments of gender and sexuality studies, along with race, diaspora, and identity. The discussions presented in these fields of study are essential for understanding our history and the conditions it has created in the modern age. Racial and sexual markers, such as whiteness, have long served as grossly arbitrary means of judging more complex constructs of identity.

The opportunity to rigorously analyze written theory in a historical context is an invaluable component of a university core. When approaching controversial topic matters such as racial markers, it's incredibly important to remain impartial. UChicago prides itself on positioning students to be able to productively take part in such discourse. "I'd say that discussions in the classroom seem soaked more in the theoretical aspects of things rather than opinions," says Clara Rabbani, a fourth year student at UChicago. "If you want to bring up your identity or opinion, it really has to be tangible and based on research."

When looking at controversies such as the above at UChicago, a pattern becomes increasingly clear: the overwhelming majority of conflicts between conservatism and academia stem from the reactionary nature of conservative discourse — instead of attempting to engage with facts and promote dialectical reasoning, highly educated conservatives use platforms such as social media to incite indignance in those who are unable — or unwilling — to understand the topics being discussed in the academic sphere.

This platform has been wildly successful for organizations such as Turning Point USA, which place inflammatory speakers at universities around the world and use the subsequent backlash to frame themselves as victims and political dissidents. This exact method was employed at Saint Louis University in 2021, when the College Republicans group attempted to bring in speaker Matt

Walsh. After being barred from speaking at the university, he was forced to secure an off-campus venue to spew his anti-choice and anti-queer rhetoric. Conservative news outlets were quick to criticize the university, painting Walsh as a victim of censorship.

By allowing an increasingly radicalized population of white, Christian males to perceive themselves as victims of persecution in a society where they enjoy immense privilege, conservative pundits are able to exploit those less educated than themselves to increase their wealth. This victimization destroys the incentive to perform research and adopt views that have merit — instead of adjusting their viewpoints to fit reality, conservatives lean on politicians to outlaw the teaching of theories they're unable to disprove. Recently, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis made headlines for signing three bills which gutted DEI programs, eroded tenure for professors, and placed restrictions on discourse in public universities. These changes will not only lower the quality of higher education in Florida by tearing down the pedagogical enterprise through limiting theoretical discussion, but will also greatly impact upward mobility for lower and middle class students in Florida — students who can only afford in-state tuition will be a step behind their peers in many of their fields upon graduation.

DeSantis' war on "wokeness" is possibly the largest restriction on education we've seen since the German Student Union burned books they viewed as ideologically opposed to Nazism — including the entire library of the Institute for Sexual Research, effectively erasing the entire history of queer people in Germany. These book burnings were, of course, a prelude to the persecution of Jewish, Marxist, queer, and otherwise-deemed "undesirable" scholars. As Clara and I agreed in the closing moments of our discussion, it's much too easy to read theory as just that, completely neglecting how it impacts people's lives. If history has taught us one thing, it's that whenever books burn, they're followed by human beings.

We are at a crossroads in the United States. Our concept of "American exceptionalism" has created a medium within which we are unable to question the norms and structures that have created the world we live in today. To suggest a systemic flaw is viewed as traitorship, to believe that we have the capacity to build a more just, equitable society is deemed radical. Every day, it seems, those pushing for progress have a new reason to be discouraged.

Alas, the American dream is far from dead; our current system is by no means incorrigible. That is not to say, however, that systemic change isn't essential to end the perennial cycle of discrimination and dehumanization of marginalized populations that humanity has found itself in. Critical inquiry is the gateway to understanding, and it is only through understanding our past that we can correct our present and ensure a more equitable future. To be critical of America is not to hate it — to be critical of America is to love it. As American citizens it is our duty to question the structures that exist and embrace progress, even if it seems scary at first glance. As students of the human condition, it is our responsibility to continue to analyze the perpetual struggles of humanity through a holistic scope, considering the mind, body, and spirit of every individual who may be impacted by our action — or inaction. Above all, it's absolutely pertinent that when we encounter threats to progress, we have the courage to ask their perpetrators *what are you afraid of?* and be prepared for whatever response we may receive.

"I'm Not a Feminist... I Know How to Cook"

By Charlotte Gregg

Videos saying something like I'm not a feminist ... I wear dresses, or insert any vaguely feminine activity, have been all over platforms like TikTok and are part of the pushback of mostly young, white, conservative women against feminism.

Some of these women have labeled themselves trad wives. The trad wife stays home; while her husband goes to work, she cooks and cleans, and oftentimes looks after her children. While this may sound a lot like the job of a stay-at-home mom, the role occupied by a trad wife is different. A trad wife is supposed to embody the perfect role of a traditional 1950's housewife; she not only takes on all of the traditional responsibilities around the house, but is also completely submissive to her husband and tends to hold other extreme conservative values.

There are a myriad of reasons that women may choose to stay home; for some, it is just the lifestyle choice that works best for them and their family. Trad wives, however, decide to live this lifestyle for more specific reasons than just a lifestyle choice. The belief of trad wives is that women's role is exclusively in the home and that the job of a woman is to submit to and look after her husband. They are emblematic of what the ultra-conservative right believe life should be: a sanitized image of the 1950s.

The trad wife at its core is a hyper-performance of gender. They take what they believe a woman should be and attempt to perform it perfectly. In this performance of gender, women become symbols of the home, morality, and tradition. Through being this perfect traditional wife, trad wives are protecting these values that the far-right often perceives as under attack. The far-right perceives American and family values to be under attack by the left and mainstream culture. In the "culture wars," where the home and family values are seen as being under attack by the left, the trad wife's role in the home is positioned as being on the front line.

Feminism is at fault for the major problems of the world in the trad wife worldview. In their very real critiques of mainstream feminism, trad wives swing hard the other way into super conservative, anti-feminism. The mainstream liberal white feminism has failed women in a number of ways. Economic independence has been integral in the women's liberation movement and allows women to have the freedom to make their own choices and not be dependent on their husbands. However, women have been pushed into the workforce as a means of liberation while still being expected to carry the bulk of the work that it takes to raise children and maintain a home. Women are "girl bosses" and are encouraged to put extraordinary efforts into their careers in order to be taken

seriously in the corporate world. Instead of just working one full time job, many women, especially those with children, are working two: the job at which they earn a wage and the full time job that is to manage a home and raise a family. They have to navigate the double-edged sword that comes with being a woman with a family in the workplace. If they are completely dedicated to their job, then they are a bad mom and ignoring their families. If they are taking time off to take care of their families and going home instead of putting in the extra hours, then they are seen as bad employees who will never excel in the corporate world. If this is all not perfectly managed, then they are also at fault.

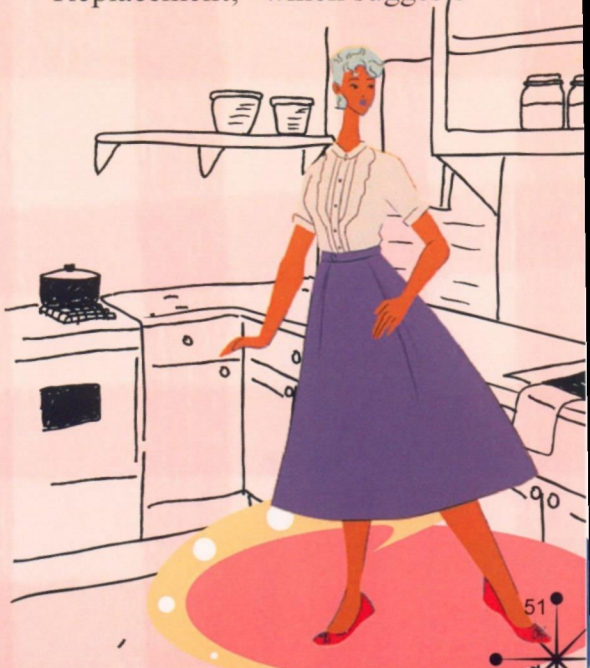
With all this in mind, the decision to stay home and not subjugate oneself to the stresses of a corporate world and instead focus on the very time consuming job of being a wife and mother makes some sense. However, trad wives take this a step further and say that women are not meant to be working outside the home.

According to anthropologist Catherine Tebaldi, one of the issues that the trad wife movement builds off of is seeing the socioeconomic struggles that come with living in a late-stage capitalistic world. Instead of attributing these struggles to economic systems, they are attributed to a decline of "traditional" values, an idea which is often seen on the far Christian-right. Therefore, returning to "traditional" roles is the answer to these economic and social challenges. The trad wife sees herself as escaping the grind lifestyle of capitalism for a simpler and more traditional one. However, these issues are not the fault of feminism and progressive changes, but rather the result of an economic system that is failing us. Trad wives are also only out of the capitalist system on the surface level; they are living off their husbands who are participating in capitalism and helping to support him in that role.

Though trad wives may seem like a harmless internet trend, there are some real harms to it. While many women make the choice to not work outside of the home, becoming a trad wife is different. Trad wives are actively deciding to contribute to their own oppression. One of the issues with trad wives is that they perpetuate an unrealistic caricature of what a woman should be. They support a narrative that men can expect a trad wife lifestyle from women.

Trad wives also occupy an incredibly privileged position in that they are almost exclusively middle- and upper-class white women. They are in a socioeconomic position to be able to afford to have only one working adult in the family. They are able to spend their time making homemade foods and homeschooling their children rather than working to support their family. Women like the TikToker Nara Smith are able to spend their time making breakfast cereal from scratch instead of earning an income. However, they cast judgment on women who are not in the same position of privilege that they are.

Most trad wives are white women and this is not a coincidence; the trad wife movement is connected to white supremacy. The traditional roles that the trad wife seeks to emulate are those of a white family in the 1950s, and she seeks to uphold those values. Part of the job of a trad wife is to have babies for her husband. This is connected to the conspiracy on the far-right known as the "Great Replacement," which suggests



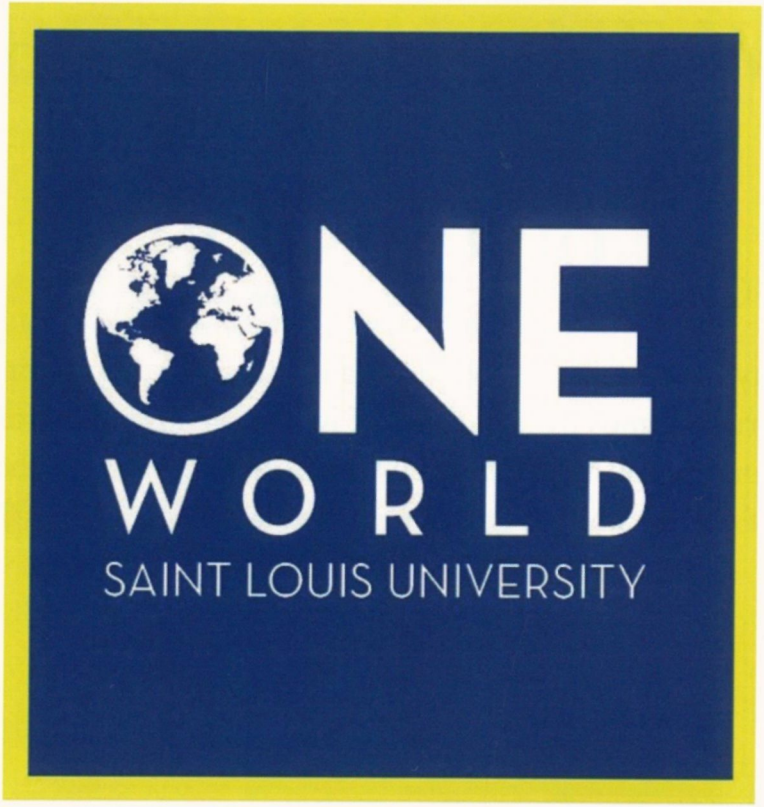
that white people are being replaced by migrants and people of color. It is due to this that a good trad wife must make as many white children as possible to combat this so-called "white genocide."

Trad wives are where the push-back against feminism meets anti-capitalism, and this movement highlights the flaws in both. While the harms of trad wives are clear, there are some things that can be done to combat these ideas. First, don't be a trad wife as well as be aware of the rhetoric used by the right to make this lifestyle seem appealing. Trad wives make claims of breaking free from the labor of the workforce when in reality they are just doing a different kind of labor and experience subjugation from their husbands rather than from a boss or manager. On the surface, living as a trad wife may look very aesthetic and appealing, but in reality it only serves the oppression of women.

Better support for working women with families is also needed. It is possible to build systems that benefit women who work and make it easier rather than more difficult to do both. These would be policies that help to lower the cost of childcare as well as offer paid family leave for both men and women. Men also have a role in taking on their fair share of the housework, child rearing, and mental load.

Finally, we need better feminism. Our feminism should work to fight back against all oppressive systems, including those of the patriarchy and class. Being a feminist means recognizing where the oppression of women occurs in all forms and making efforts to fight against it, not be part of it.

Our feminism also needs to meet people where they are at. It should be accessible to those who may not be as familiar with the concepts and to those who are in the most oppressed positions.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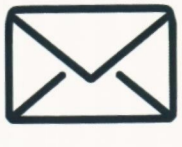

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